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Number 70
April 1990

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Definitive Computer Game Magazine



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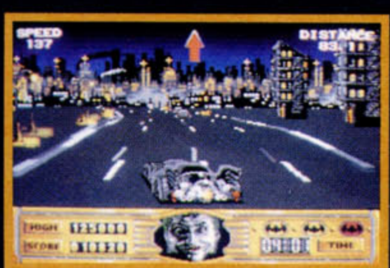
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Circle Reader Service #71

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Covering the World of Computer Games For Nine Years

April 1990 Number 70



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Champions of Krynn

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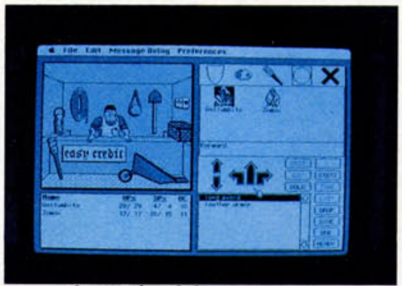
Avalon Hill Game Company
4517 Harford Road
Baltimore, MD 21214

LEGENDS OF THE LOST REALM: This is another fine, fairly standard game of the fantasy role-playing ilk. The graphics are functional, the story is all there, and there are lots of character classes, skills and spells for you to vary your strategy with. It's the ease of learning this game which is so nice, as the documentation was written for the good natured, impatient average Macintosh user. Lots of potential is here for a series using this system. Macintosh with 800K disk drive and 1MB of memory ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Blue Valley
29 Shepard Street
Walton, NY 13856

THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN: This hard-to-describe text adventure walks you through a story which is most unusual. The writing style is self-proclaimed "peasant Anglo-Saxon", with an unusual stream of consciousness to it and plenty of existential plot shifts. The Magic Mountain is a story for women and something of a computer text fantasy. It's an eerie place where a particular woman's basic hatred and lust for men is poignantly spelled out with an odd dash of female bonding with the near occult. IBM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

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Legends of the Lost Realm



Federation



TV Sports Basketball


Batman the Movie



Iron Lord



Action in the North Atlantic

Cinemaware
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, CA 91362

FEDERATION: Here is a game of deceptive depth. More than just an arcade shoot-'em-up, Federation is also a space ship flight simulator. As if that weren't enough, there is even a reason for you to be out there dealing death and destruction for you can also build up your trading empire and conquer planets! More than just a joystick jockey's exercise tool, Federation is a deep space challenge. Good luck, cadet. Amiga, Atari ST ($49.95).Circle #3.

TV SPORTS BASKETBALL: The players take on the role as coach and general manager of an expansion franchise for a professional basketball league. They must raise their teams from obscurity and turn them into contenders by careful drafting and training of players. Optionally, players may resolve games arcade-style to determine wins and losses. Great potential for league play. Amiga ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

Data East USA, Inc.
1850 Little Orchard Street
San Jose, CA 95125

BATMAN: THE MOVIE: Holy arcade games! This true-to-movie-plot move, zap and duck game takes you from scene to scene at Axis Chemicals, the streets of Gotham City, the Batcave, the Gotham City Carnival and ends at the Gotham Cathedral. This game is exactly what you'd expect from an official, licensed Batproduct. C-64 ($29.95), Amiga ($44.95) and Atari ST ($39.95). Circle #5.

Electronic Arts/UBI Soft
P.O. Box 7578
San Mateo, CA 94403

IRON LORD: This intriguing quest/arcade game boasts an excellent story line to go with the graphics. The game certainly has plenty of challenge to it, as the player must ride around

CGW

Continued on page 63

Cardboard and Circuitry



The State of the Industry: With software publishers beginning to actually utilize the talents of pen and paper game designers (i.e. Steve Peterson's upcoming *Champions* game at **Miles Computing**, the contributions of Michael Stackpole and Liz Danforth to recent **Interplay** products, the work of Liz and Ken St. Andre on **New World Computing**'s *Tunnels and Trolls* game, George MacDonald's work on **Strategic Simulations, Inc.**'s licenses from **TSR**, etc.), it will be interesting to note how certain design problems are solved. Will "point and click" interfaces solve the age-old parser question or will the inherent limitations of the interface cause gamers to feel more restricted? Does the use of numerical attributes in CRPGs make the games equivalent, as one witty **GEnie** subscriber suggested, " . . . to checkbook balancing programs . . ."? ("Whoops," he said, "I lost 30 shares of hitpoints, so I have to transfer 45 shares of my funds from my Magic stock to recover them.") What are the alternatives?

The State of the Magazine: This issue of *CGW* features several articles which touch on questions of game design. The sneak preview of *Loom* is based on playing the game, as well as continuing conversations with designer Brian Moriarity and artist Mark Ferrari. The preview was written from the perspective of both the underlying philosophy behind and the game design constraints built into the product. In addition, we have summarized some of the salient points from *The Journal of Computer Game Design* articles and presented a new, irregular column on technology's impact on the gamer, "The Circuit Writer". Finally, M. Evan Brooks shows how looking at the "real world" model behind *Harpoon* can make one a better player. We hope that these types of articles will help our readers appreciate the delicate craftsmanship required for good game design and hence, enhance the enjoyment of future computer games.

This issue also inaugurates some changes in *CGW*'s editorial staff. Alan Emrich, former publisher of *Fire & Movement*, has been promoted to Assistant Editor in Charge of Spelling Error Implementation and Trash Pick-Up. As co-designer of the *Modern Naval Battles* card game for **World Wide Wargames** and consultant for the redesign of *A House Divided* (**Game Designers' Workshop**'s boardgame), the insidious potential of Alan's sometimes controversial wargame reviews looming on the horizon could strike instant fear into the hearts and minds of wargame publishers on all continents. The slashing, penetrating observations in "Taking A Peek" have already caused much consternation among senior editorial staff members. **CGW**

Put-On Peeks



Contest Results

In January we asked you to write Taking A Peek style reviews of ten fictional game titles. There were many creative submissions from all across the country. Thomas Fisken of Highland Park, NJ had the overall best reviews and is accorded glorious fame by virtue of being declared the winner of our Put On Peeks contest. We include two of his "reviews" here. So here were our favorite Put On Peeks:

688 ATTACK TUG
Submitted by Tracy Morgan
Milford, OH

Finally a naval simulation for those who have never developed the hand-eye coordination necessary for success in arcade action games. From the moment the player takes command of his tug, he will be rewarded with beautiful slow moving graphics. As tug captain, you can increase your crew's efficiency by engaging in mundane training exercises or going directly to combat. The realism of this game is unparalleled, and one will quickly believe that the sweat on his brow is actually ocean mist produced as his tug pounds through the surf at six knots.

PETE ROSE FEVER
Submitted by Tom Budas
Bolingbrook, IL

It's almost game time. You have to move fast to raise cash for a bet. So sign autographs and sell them. Next, it's the betting parlor, but dodge that tail, it's the Commissioner's man. Place your bet based on the odds. You'll need to make $500 to pay off a bookie or he'll turn you in. Now it's bottom of the 6th, you're ahead 4-2, men on second and third, 1 out, but you're supposed to lose by 2. What will you do?

ANCIENT ART OF WAR AT THREE
Submitted by Thomas Fisken
Highland Park, NJ

This new program from *Kinderbund* is the ultimate combat simulation we've been waiting for -- *Pre-School*. Not for those with weak stomachs, this game puts you inside the body of a typical three year old and challenges you to make it through one more day at the Early Earners Day Care and Career Training Program. Fight for those blocks, eat someone else's snack, survive the grueling nap, and then -- oh no! -- it's potty time again.

MICROSTUFF ACCOUNTANCY SIMULATOR
Submitted by Thomas Fisken
Highland Park, NJ

Fitting nicely into Microstuff's existing product line, this interesting release comes with a five volume set of instructions, a $795 price tag and a grey suit. The electrifying world of certified public accountants is revealed to the uninitiated for the first time in this extensively researched and painstakingly detailed simulation. For the IBM and compatibles, this program is distributed on 23 360K diskettes.

688 ATTACK TUG (Another View)
Submitted by Arthur Cromwell
Chicago, IL

Polluters in the bay! Freighter blocking the harbor entrance! You must deal with these and other maritime problems as commander of the experimental Pelican-class Attack Tugboat. You will go on a variety of missions in the rivers, bays and harbors of the world. Speedboats causing a disturbance in the harbor? Let them try to outrun a Harpoon missile! Partygoers on that yacht spreading garbage in the bay? Use you Phalanx Gatling Gun to spread *them* across the water. At higher ranks you may go up against the giant leaking oil tanker. Don't "Exxon-erate" them this time!

Look for a new contest next month. **CGW**

It Came from Out of the Disk Drive

Cinemaware's "It Came From The Desert"

by Allen L. Greenberg

Among our culture's more popular paranoias has always been radiation. Any kid who grew up in the 50's or 60's practically took a course on the subject at Saturday matinees. Here he learned that radiation could summon angry disciplinarians from another planet, awaken irritable behemoths, or mutate the family pet into something which resembled Lon Chaney's makeup kit.

The most frightening lessons came from movies such as *Them, The Beginning of the End,* or *Tarantula*—films in which tiny industrious insects assumed the size of national monuments and marched about bearing the demeanor of an Attila the Hun. It was well known that a week which began with a luminous object falling from the sky would likely end with chitinous mess covering most of the earth. Such is the nightmare facing the unsuspecting town of Lizard Breath, California. Only Dr. Greg Bradley, as played by the gamer, of course, is aware of the danger. Only the player knows that *It Came From The Desert.*



It Came From The Desert (*Desert*) follows the familiar Cinemaware format of strategic decision-making mixed with various arcade sequences, strung together in a cinematic plot. The graphics, music and sounds are of the usual high standards set by that company, and are nicely evocative of the atomic-age monsters which have gnawed out their own niche in Hollywood history. *Desert* is one of the most enjoyable programs yet to emerge from Cinemaware.

TITLE:	It Came From The Desert
SYSTEM:	Amiga
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Ken Melville David Riordan
PUBLISHER:	Cinemaware Westlake Village, CA

A Tale So Terrifying (Plot Synopsis)

The first challenge which faces Dr. Bradley is to convince the other residents of Lizard Breath that they are in danger of becoming the residents of a very large ant farm. If the good doctor should decide to take a long nap, for example, the ants will arrive and convince the town without his effort. Of course, it will be too late to do anything about them.

The most important person to convince is the mayor. Unfortunately, he is of that same breed of mayor who told the swimmers in *Jaws* that it was safe to stay in the water. The player's responsibility is to find strong evidence. So, armed with a map of the town, he or she must investigate every odd happening. Even small, seemingly innocuous occurrences—such as the cow which was found with its head bitten off—deserve attention. And, what was that about a meteor falling nearby the other night?

Naturally, pieces of ant would also strongly support our hero's story. To help our protagonist find some of these, it might be useful to consult his friend, Dr.(H.G.!) Wells. He should have some valuable information on how to survive an encounter with one of the creatures.

Confronting and defeating a mob of angry ants is Dr. Bradley's next hurdle. The player's goal is to aim the doctor's .45-caliber pistol with the joystick, thus exterminating the first ant to be seen. If successful, the view then shifts to an overhead view, from where the player controls the hero in lobbing explosives at the approaching hoard.

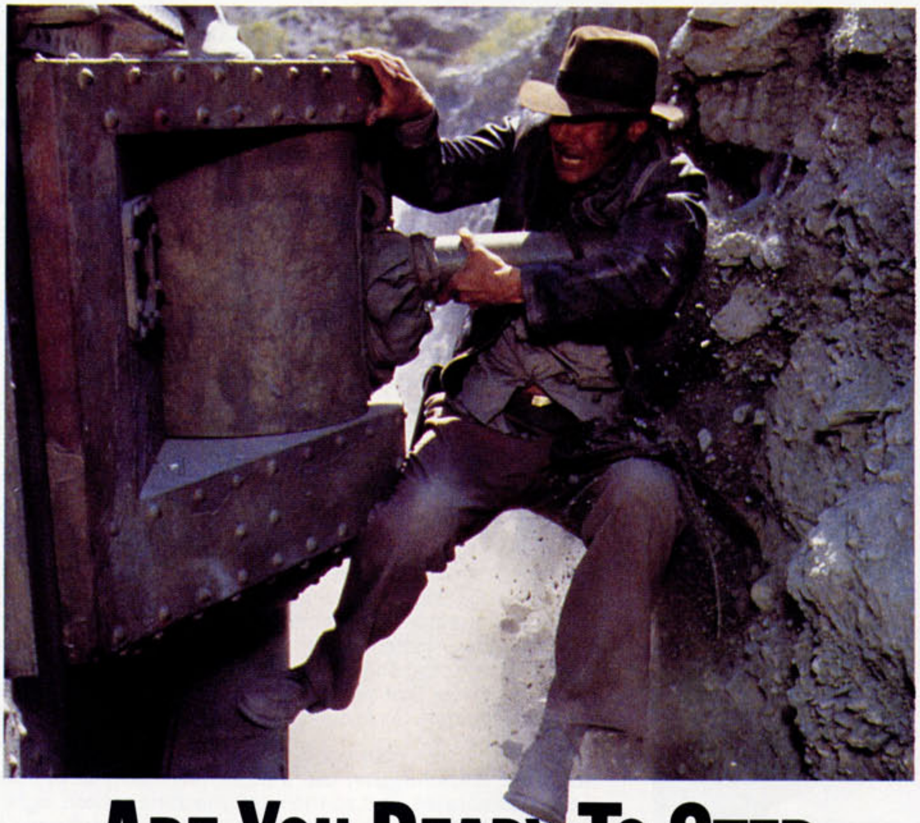
Once Dr. Bradley (or the ants) have convinced the mayor that a state of emergency actually exists in Lizard Breath, the player is given the responsibility of deploying the town's slim resources against the creatures. Members of the army, police and well-meaning townsfolk are ready to go into battle. There are even a limited number of tanks and jets available. At this point, one can either direct the doctor to climb into a tank and participate in the action or to go elsewhere and be informed of the results by the police.

Lizard Breath will not be safe until the queen ant is destroyed. Dr. Bradley must find and enter the labyrinth which is the queen's nest. In a climactic sequence, he must locate the queen's chamber, drop off timed explosives, and escape.

Characters So Convincing (Game Challenges)

In addition to the mega-picnic ants, Dr.

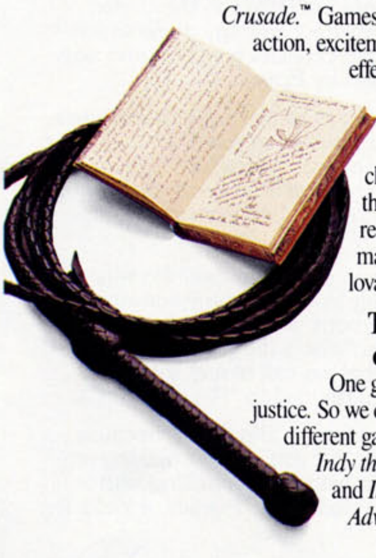
Continued on page 58



ARE YOU READY TO STEP INTO INDY'S SHOES?

Move larger-than-life exploits from the movie screen to the computer screen, and the results are often small potatoes.

Not so with *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.*™ Games that capture the action, excitement, and special effects of the greatest *Indy* movie of them all. And *Indy* the game character has all the style, wit, and resourcefulness that make the big lug so lovable in the movie.



Too much for one game.

One game can't do *Indy* justice. So we designed two very different game experiences: *Indy the Action Game*, and *Indy the Graphic Adventure*.

And in both cases, it seems that Nazi Germany has just declared war on the Jones boys.

Red hot, slam-bam action.

Indy the Action Game delivers classic arcade thrills on a hell-bent chase for the greatest treasure in history—the Holy Grail. As *Indy*, you'll use your whip, your fists, and your wits. Escaping grave-robbing cutthroats. Pulverizing Gestapo goons. And surviving the lethal trials of the Grail Temple itself.

How's your I.Q.?

In *Indy the Graphic Adventure*, you'll find out if you can keep up with the guy with the whip and the hat. Maybe you'll make the same decisions *Indy* made in the movie. Or score higher I.Q. (*Indy Quotient*) points by finding subtle or ingenious alternatives. All the while exploring a stunning world of sights, sounds and characters—many of which you didn't see in the film.

Use Lucasfilm's acclaimed—and enhanced—point n' click interface to toss off a sarcastic one-liner, sweet talk your way out of a tight squeeze, or just haul off and slug the sucker. And thumb through Henry Jones'



*Knocking Nazis off precarious Zeppelin catwalks is all in a day's work in **Indy the Action Game.***



*The trail to the Grail is strewn with rats, skeletons, and much, much worse in **Indy the Graphic Adventure.***

64-page Grail Diary for precious and fascinating clues.

We made a spectacle of ourselves.

Both games bring you the great graphics, exciting camera angles, and stirring sound tracks that made the *Indiana Jones* films so special.

Of course, our development team had the advantage of working with the people who made the movie. And that's how we made sure that when you step into Indy's shoes, your feet are planted firmly in the fire.

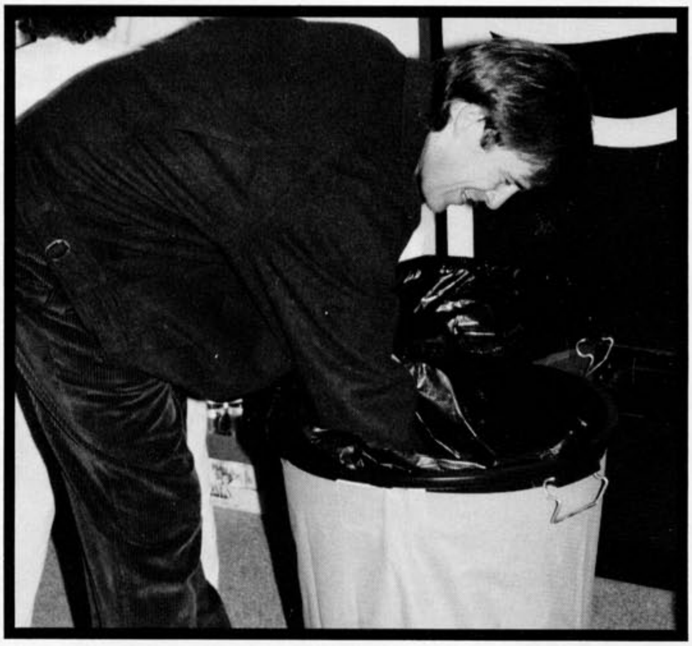
LUCASFILM™ GAMES



Action game available for Commodore 64, IBM, Atari ST and Amiga. Graphic Adventure available for IBM (includes AdLib™ sound card support), Amiga, and Atari ST.

The Rumor Bag

by Sigmund Jung James



(Continued from CGW #69)

The soft and dulcet tones of concerned whispers were a comforting background as I fought against the blackness. Colored spheres were dancing about in front of me like those in **Accolade**'s upcoming *The Game of Harmony*, a new type of action game where players try to merge the different colors together in the proper way before they blow up. Randomly-generated music prompts the player to make the right moves, so that the "harmony" involved refers to that of both color and sound. The twist is that you gain points by halting on-screen explosions rather than causing them.

Right now, I felt as if some of those explosions were going off in my head. To take my mind off the pain, I concentrated on recognizing some of the voices around me: Editors Sipe and Wilson, my public relations assistant (the buoyantly irrepressible Ann) and a strange voice with the slightest hint of a Germanic accent. "He vill come out of it, ven he vants to," said the unidentified voice. "Right, now, he is suffering from a paranoid reaction to oedipal frustrations caused by archetypal confusion, undoubtedly traceable to an etiosis in excessive exposure to computer games. Ze blow to the head vas probably a senseless act of gang violence vich enabled his subconscious to retreat to the level of his fantasies."

Fantasies? I know the difference between reality and fantasy. **Dynamix** is working on an interactive story in which the player acts as a futuristic private investigator on the trail of some Oriental street gangs. Apparently, the gangs utilize skin patches to administer genetically mutating drugs to their victims. That's fantasy! Entitled, *Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon*, the adventure will feature a complete "point and click" interface, as well as placing an emphasis on character interaction and story-telling rather than arcade sequences. The artwork is by Robert Caracol, a comic artist on the West Coast (**Dark Horse Comics**). It is hand-drawn and painted, then scannned into the game program with lots of animation. That's reality!

"He vill probably juxtapose ze memories of past experiences, real ones he had und vicarious ones from books und films, mit ze current problems he is having," said the unknown lecturer. Confuse the past with the present? Not me. How could I confuse the old arcade game *Stellar 7*, which Damon Slye of **Dynamix** originally published for the Apple II and C-64 machines in 1983, with the *Stellar 7* due to be released by **Dynamix** in June? The old one used wireframe graphics and limited color. The new IBM version will feature fast-scrolling VGA graphics in a 3-Space environment and much more game. Damon would slice me up with a laser if people confused the two products!

"Ve can expect him to transfer his personality und methods onto others as a defense mechanism to excuse his anti-social behavior," my unseen analyst continued. Anti-social behavior? Was he referring to any particular idiosyncrasy? My penchant for digging through the trash cans of software publishers (whenever I visit them) happens to be an extremely useful device for me, personally. In one trash can, I found a memo indicating that Bob Bates (formerly of **Challenge Software**, the company which developed *Sherlock: The Riddle of the Crown Jewels* and *Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur* for **Infocom**) has quietly expressed announced his intention of creating new text-based adventures. The hastily scribbled notes on the back of a "Girls of Mediagenic" calendar suggested that he may have obtained financing from a defense contractor that wished to diversify in order to create a new adventure game development system (based on what he learned from using **Infocom**'s Zork Interactive Language). There was even a note that he might have have hired Steve Meretzky, author of *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, as one of his designers.

You never know what you'll find in those wastebaskets. **Strategic Simulations, Inc.**'s most useful source of information is the wastebasket next to the copy machine. There, right next to a crumpled drawing of one of the company's employees as a gun-wielding female character in a futuristic role-playing game, was a proposal for a new *War in the Pacific* to be designed by Gary Grigsby. This one would conceivably look quite a bit different than the Apple II and C-64 version with: game turns representing a week of action, 100 miles to the hex, and possible inclusion of nuclear options. There weren't any indications as to whether the company had "bought" the design or not.

Accolade's treasure trove of trash can be found in the lounge area. There, underneath the understated ambience of an old burrito wrapper and a plastic cupcake container, were the notes for a deal in which **Accolade** would market *Ishido* in the United States and Europe. *Ishido* is the abstract strategy game which sold out of 1,000 copies in a limited collector's edition and was originally scheduled to be published by **Epyx**.

At **Electronic Arts**, the big news was to be found in a marketing department trashcan. There, I discovered that *Caesar*, Kellyn Beeck's game in which the player attempts to advance from ordinary soldier to Emperor of Rome through a series of challenges for both action and strategy gamers, had been renamed, *Centurion: Defender of Rome*.

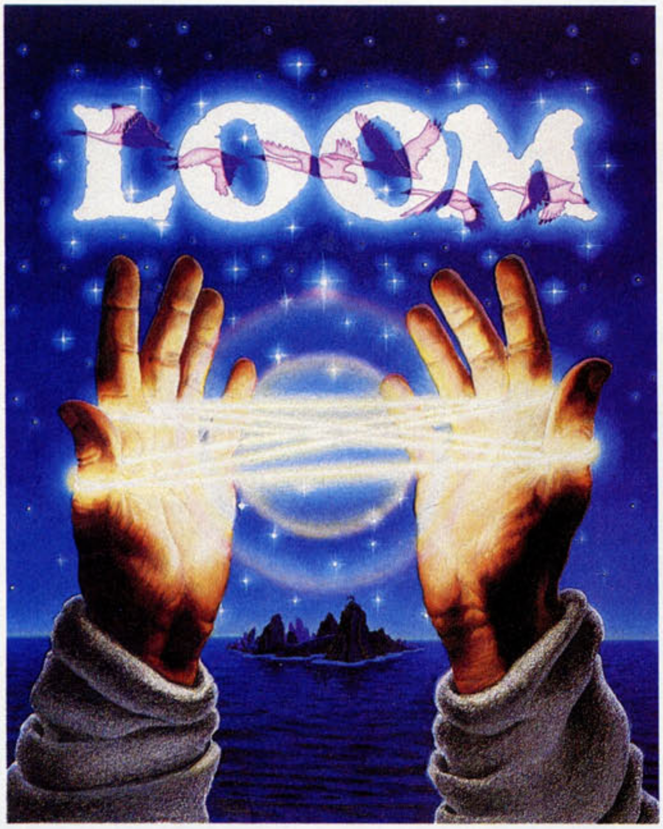
Transfer my *modus operandi* onto someone else? No way! I opened my eyes and sat up quickly to confront my accuser. There, in that Las Vegas hospital room, were my editors, my assistant and a strange fellow in a suit. "Who's the geek?" I asked Editor-in-Chief Sipe (That's not what we call him at the office. There, he's the "Big Guy" and he's married to "Mrs. Big Guy").

"We were worried about you," answered "Big Guy", "because you kept regaining consciousness, but you weren't making any sense. We thought you'd lost it, so we were consulting with a psychiatrist the hospital recommended to us. Frankly, it looks like he knows his stuff."

I looked at the shrink as he quickly scribbled notes in a small notebook, noticing for the first time that my psychiatrist wore a paper bag on his head. Maybe there was something to that idea of transference, after all. **CGW**

The Warp and Woof of Destiny Lucasfilm Games' "Loom"

by Johnny L. Wilson



What if the destiny of every individual was so delicately woven into the fabric of reality that any attempt to unravel that fate could rend existence into meaninglessness? What if the caretakers of that reality had become so intransigent in their understanding of that fabric of existence that they began to forbid the noble actions of visionary individuals and simply protected the status quo? What if a shadow of entropy had begun to creep inexorably across the landscape of that world, fairly crying out for bold individual initiative and innovation?

No, this is neither a description of the radical right holding the United States hostage, fundamentalist evangelicals holding the reins of our educational and religious establishments, nor the last vestiges of Communist Party members preparing for a counter-revolution. Rather, it is the philosophical underpinning of *Loom*, Brian Moriarty's fantasy adventure game. Like all good fantasy, the story leaves room for the player to draw intriguing sociological, philosophical, political and/or theological conclusions, but does not overtly demand such reflection. Indeed, it is simply a smashing good story that beckons its hearer/viewer/reader/player to reflect on it again and again.

Guild-Edged Society (The Game's Universe)

Loom takes place in a world of segregated societies, each with its own specialized function and distinctive look within the game's universe. The Guild of Shepherds fulfils the food function, while living in pastures of idyllic bliss. These pastures, thanks to the artistic touch of noted fantasy artist Mark Ferrari, offer an ambience reminiscent of Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*. The Guild of Blacksmiths manages to provide the manufacturing function concerned with metal fabrication, while dwelling in a city which Ferrari rendered as a floating anvil. The manufacturing function concerned with glass and crystal takes place in a city made of glass



Bobbin "Forges" Toward The City of Blacksmiths

(Ferrari used a cross between Coca-Cola bottle green and the dominant hue of the Emerald City of Oz to give the visual reference for this guild) and the Guild of Clerics provides for the world's "spiritual" needs.

The most important guild, however, is the Guild of Weavers. Like Clothos, Atropos and Lachesis of Greek mythology, these guardians of destiny protect the grand designs of Fate from the capricious whims of humanity. The player's character, Bobbin Threadbare, is an unwelcome strand in the fabric of the Weavers' understanding. He is "Destiny's Child" according to a myriad of meanings and players must discover from the opening sounds of the radio drama (a cassette recording is included with the game) through the triumphant conclusion of the game, what this appellation really means. Does it mean the end of the world or life as the Weavers understand it? Does it mean the inevitability of chaos or the necessity of the heroic? The player will decide.

A Pattern Emerges (Design Considerations)

The *Loom* design, unlike some of Moriarty's earlier designs (*Trinity* and *Beyond Zork*), was structured by a benevolent creator. By design, Moriarty insists that players cannot get into a situation which they cannot solve. There are no limitations on saving the game to frustrate the players, no accusations of unethical gaming and no tacit competition between the designer and gamer. To the contrary, the author *wants* players to succeed. The game is "directive", even if gently so, in that Moriarty uses a "rubber wall" theory of game design to hem the player into an environment until all the "Must Do"s (actions which must be accomplished in order to advance the plot) are completed. The player often has the illusion of freedom, while being gently prodded into finishing his task. In fact, the underlying theory of the design may state volumes about the philosophy underlying the story.

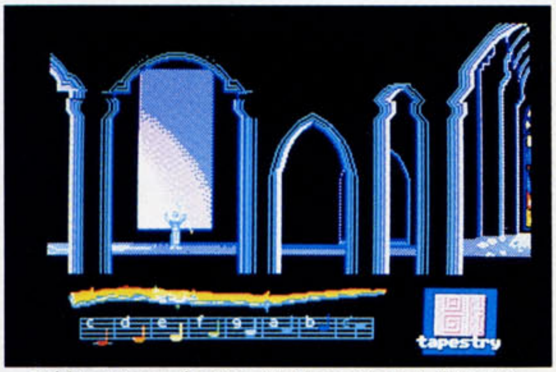
Another way the author directs the player can be found in the way the game treats the magic. Magic is cast by spinning a "draft" of music (a mixed metaphor from the art of weaving that indi-

Continued on page 16


THE KEYS TO MARAMON™
Maramon Library
What will Lumelia do?
Study Talk Keys Check
Quit Hold Use Xit
Day 2 Hour 16
Life 35 Gold 37
Score 225
Lumelia greets Timothy Quint.
"Hello, Lumelia," replies the librarian. "Feel free to study anything you wish."
Lumelia Longsword
Ring Mail
Hornbern Flamewand
27 Charges
7 Monsters Ring Mail
Stavros Hammer
No Armor
Welcome to Maramon!
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Continued from page 14

cates, in this context, a series of four musical notes) upon an object (item, character or creature). Everything is handled by "point and click". The player simply clicks on an "object", followed by the four notes of the musical staff with which he wants to transform the "object". The program will perform the musical run and provide the player with a visual or textual response to the "draft". If an object can be manipulated by magic, at all, an icon will appear on the screen. "If it's not important," says Brian, "you can't touch it. If it is important, we won't let you lose it." So, the author avoids the pitfall of using a restrictive parser or menu system by simplifying the interface.



Bobbin "Unravels" Historic Sagas From A Tapestry

In a similar way, the game is quite helpful when one uses magic in ways other than those which the designer expected players to use in solving puzzles. When magic is used correctly, blue sparkles of "Disney Dust" twinkle and the spell's effect is shown on the screen (Ken Macklin animated the special effects with some of the neatest twinkles this side of Tinkerbell). When it is used incorrectly, one gets reddish sparkles of "Disney Dust" and some surprising messages and/or animations. Alas, one of the design team's greatest frustrations is the fact that they couldn't provide more specific animation sequences for players who use magic in innovative ways.

Why couldn't the team fit in more specific animation sequences? This is because *Loom* already has three times as much animation as the *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* graphic adventure. They realized that they had sacrificed game length for graphic and musical intensity, but they hope the visual and aural heat will more than compensate for the length of the experience.

Nevertheless, all of this visual heat caused severe consternation to the design team for two basic reasons. First, they believe that every available action must be graphically portrayed on the screen (or referenced with a text message that fits logically into the fictional parameters surrounding the universe and magic system). That takes up *beaucoup* memory. Second, as Moriarty told *CGW*, they have found that "The biggest sensory failing of interactive story games is the constant battle between the animation and the text. We're working on it, but it will probably take CD-ROM to solve it!"

The Sound of Magic (Atmosphere)

One way the team attempted to solve this conflict was through the use of sound. Sound is *extremely* important in *Loom*. The radio drama, included on cassette with each game, is not an amateurish production thrown into the package to offer the appearance of value added. It is well-acted and technically excellent, in addition to masterfully setting the stage for the story. No one should boot their computer and start the game without listening to the drama. The story wouldn't be the same without it.

Another way that sound enhances the experience is through the 22.5 minutes of non-looping sound used in the game's soundtrack. The thematic sequences from Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" is executed so marvelously by George Alistair Sanger's digitization that it even sounds great on the IBM internal speaker. Of course, it sounds even better on the **Ad Lib, Game Blaster, Sound Blaster** and, with the upgrade (available for $10.00 through **Electronic Arts** or downloadable from **Compuserve** and **GEnie**), on the **Roland MT-32** and **LAPC-1**.

Why is this romantic musical score vital to the game experience? Moriarty explains that this is because Tchaikovsky's own melancholia underlies the musical motifs. The player's character is an outcast to all of the guilds, even his own, and must cope against the onslaughts of a hostile existence, while attempting to reach a satisfying resolution. The score is perfect for suggesting the mood. Of course, one can toggle it off if the melancholia becomes too pervasive.

Perhaps, the most important use of sound in the game is in the magic system itself. The player hears the musical/magical themes endemic to the game world and duplicates these themes to manipulate other objects, characters and creatures. In fact, the major difference between difficulty levels has to do with the way the magic is experienced. At the easiest mode, one "sees" and hears the musical themes as the notes are written on-screen for the player's benefit. In the standard mode, one "sees" the notes flicker on the scale and hears them, but the notes are not written down on behalf of the player. In the most difficult mode, one only "hears" the themes and must figure out the notes oneself. Those with perfect pitch who manage to successfully complete the game will get to see one animated sequence which no one else gets to see. Hint: In the game's context, it would be dangerous to see what successful players get to see!



Bobbin Discovers A Draft Which Isn't "For The Birds"

As the player's character progresses in the game, he does not gain experience points. Rather, he gains new notes on the musical staff available to him. As his musical range increases, he will have more drafts (spells) at his disposal and become, potentially, more powerful. This is a more creative way of charting one's progress than simply having numbers for every characteristic.

Draft Day (Conclusions)

Loom is a complete entertainment experience. It offers story, exploration, play, puzzle-solving (albeit rather simple puzzles for experienced gamers), outstanding graphics and incredible sound. In *Loom*, Moriarty manages to express hope and idealism tainted by realism. It seems a refreshing use of fantasy and most gamers will not want to miss it. **CGW**


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The Scorpion's View

Scorpia looks at "Champions of Krynn"

by Scorpia

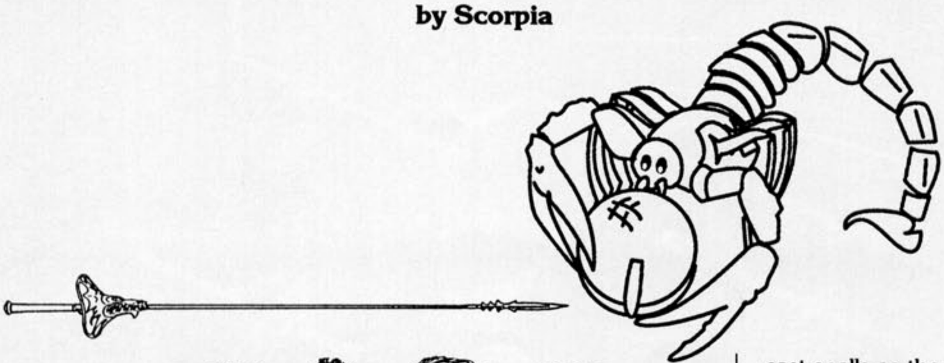




Illustration From "Champions of Krynn" Manual © TSR, INC.

Ah, you found your way here. Good! Don't mind the mess; we're still decorating the place, but we are open for business. Naturally, you're wondering what this is all about. Well, have a seat on the packing crate and I'll tell you about it.

This new column format gives me a lot more freedom: I can review a game, or review and editorialize, or just editorialize, or discuss several games at once. In other words, I can do pretty much what I please with it, unrestricted by the regular review article limitations (ahhh, power!!) (grin). So, over the coming months, you can expect to see almost anything here. What you can expect this time is a look at the latest release in SSI's AD&D series.

Champions of Krynn is a game to boot up when you don't want to spend weeks or months on an epic adventure. It was designed to be a quick play and the emphasis is definitely on combat. There are no puzzles to solve or complicated plots to follow. The action is fairly straightforward, although there are some complications of another kind.

The game mechanics and interface are pretty much the same as in *Pool of Radiance* and *Curse of the Azure Bonds*. In fact, Krynn bears some resemblance to Pool, as it is a mission-oriented game. However, this adventure takes place in the *Dragonlance* world and there are some important differences in play, particularly with regard to magic.

In the previous games, you simply had a mage, of whatever alignment, and that was it. Here, magic-users are split out by alignment, with White Robes (good), Red Robes (neutral) and Black Robes (evil). These divisions are not superficial. They have a decided effect on character abilities.

For one thing, not all spells are available to all wizards. While some spells are shared, others can only be used by a mage of a particular alignment. As an example, both Red and White mages have Magic Missile, but only a Red Mage can cast Enlarge, and only a White mage can cast Sleep. Red mages also advance faster in level (they need less experience than White mages), and obtain spells sooner.

A further complication is added by the influence of the three moons of Krynn on magic. Each "branch" of magic (Good, Neutral, Evil) is governed by one of the moons. Depending on the phase of the moon, the effect can be positive, negative, or nil.

During a waxing moon, a mage can memorize one extra spell, of any level, that the mage has in his spell book. At full moon, a mage can memorize two extra spells, gets a +1 bonus to saving throws, and is able to cast spells as though he were one level higher.

During a new moon, however, a mage receives a -1 to saving throws and his spells are cast as though he were one level lower (ouch). Fortunately, there is no penalty on spell memorization. A waning moon has no effect on magic. All mages operate at their normal levels and with normal saves.

Magic-users aren't the only class that has changed. Clerics have been modified, too. They also are divided into Good, Neutral, and Evil, although in this case, there is no difference in what spells they may use. Instead, it is the choice of which god to serve that confers certain benefits.

A cleric of Majere, for example, is able to turn undead as though he were two levels higher (which is very handy), and receives an extra spell: Silence, 15' Radius. This extra spell is in addition to all others that the cleric may have memorized. Other gods provide bestow different abilities on their clerics.

Neutral deities give, on average, fewer "extras" than good ones. However, Neutral clerics learn regular spells faster than Good ones, and have more of them. Good clerics advance slower until 5th level, after which they advance faster (but will still be behind in the matter of spells). The moons of Krynn have no effect on clerical magic.

Changes in the magic system are not the only new feature. Some alterations have been made with regard to character races, as well. In previous games, there were simply Elves and Dwarves. Now the Elves have been split into Silvanesti and Qualinesti, while Dwarves are divided into Hill and Mountain varieties.

As far as Elves are concerned, there are no differences between the two types, except that Silvanestis cannot be thieves. With Dwarves, the differences are a bit more marked. Hill Dwarves can be rangers, Mountain Dwarves cannot. Hill Dwarves advance higher as thieves, while Mountain Dwarves can have a higher charisma score.

Paladins are missing from the roster, their place being filled by the Solmanic Knights. The Knights are essentially fighters who receive the ability to cast a few clerical spells at high levels; otherwise they have nothing in common with Paladins.

The Knights are divided into three orders: Knights of The Crown, Knights of The Sword, and Knights of The Rose. The last two orders are the ones which receive clerical spells. All player characters start as Knights of the Crown, but can apply for the Sword and Rose orders when they have sufficient experience.

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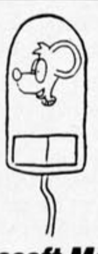


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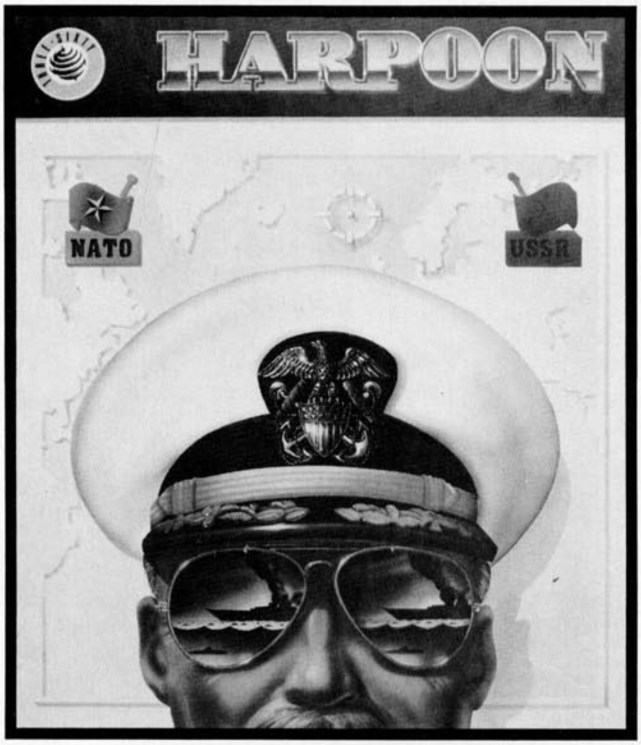
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HARPOON: Tactics & Strategy

by M. Evan Brooks



Harpoon (Version 1.1) has been released, virtually bug-free and with smaller memory requirements. Additional options have been included, e.g. allowing the player to opt for nuclear release, more information on Platform Display (particularly damage points, allowing one to determine how many weapons to fire at a particular target), air-intercept accessibility, etc.

In this article, emphasis will be placed on the three environments: air, surface, and sub-surface. The comments herein refer to the GIUK (Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Battleset); later Battlesets may yield different decisions (particularly with reference to naval gunfire), but these will be covered when the Battlesets become available.

Air Operations

Gordon Walton has described the effective utilization of aircraft as being "sixty percent (60%) of the game". In this reviewer's opinion, Mr. Walton has understated the impact of aircraft—one can be a poor ship handler and a novice at submarine operations, but still be a strategic success if he can maximize the potential of his air elements.

Aircraft are particularly fragile instruments. Unable to sustain much damage, they can be frittered away in poorly-conceived strikes. However, their offensive power is such that they can literally destroy all opposition.

Strike/Air Intercept: Soviet air elements have a much greater stand-off capability than NATO forces. They can deliver their missiles from over 100 nautical miles (AS-4 Kitchen, AS-5 Kelt, AS-6 Kingfish), while NATO air ordnance has a much shorter delivery range (*Harpoon*, 60-80; HARM, 40). This means that NATO must protect its airfields and bases by engaging Soviet threat elements at a greater distance.

While the documentation does not emphasize the defensive use of air platforms, one must quickly learn that BARCAP (Barrier Combat Air Patrols) must be maintained at *all* times. Mr. Walton prefers to leave at least 25% of his air superiority elements on CAP. This reviewer is even more conservative—preferring to have at least 33% of such platforms airborne. Note, however, that since certain aircraft are more properly used in a strike role and have a limited interceptor role at best (A-4M Skyhawk, A-6F Intruder, TU-16 Badger, TU-22 Backfire, TU-95 Bear), this is 33% of the appropriate, not total, aircraft. A proper perusal of the Platform Display will reveal which aircraft should be used in a CAP/air superiority role.

Even a small number of interceptor aircraft can render a strike ineffective. While they may not be able to down all opposition, they can force the strike elements to fire at maximum range or even abandon the strike attempt. Time is of the essence, since aircraft speeds are such that a late-detected incoming strike may not allow sufficient defensive interceptors to become airborne before the missiles are incoming. Even a few "leakers" (missiles which evade anti-missiles and strike the target) are sufficient to severely degrade future air operations from that base.

As an example, Scenario 6 (Fortress Keflavik) postulates a Soviet strike to render Keflavik ineffective. Offensively, the Soviet must penetrate NATO's air defenses and destroy the base. An optimal Soviet strategy is to render Narvik ineffective early (by strikes from Bodo) and then mass his strike aircraft (Badgers, Backfires and Bears) in a "Southern Hook". Overflying Swedish territory, then turning east and flying north to hit Keflavik from the rear will generally find an open NATO "door", which results in total destruction of the NATO airfield. Even if total destruction is not achieved, enough weapons, aircraft (on the ground) and sensor mounts will be destroyed that future raids will be virtually impossible.

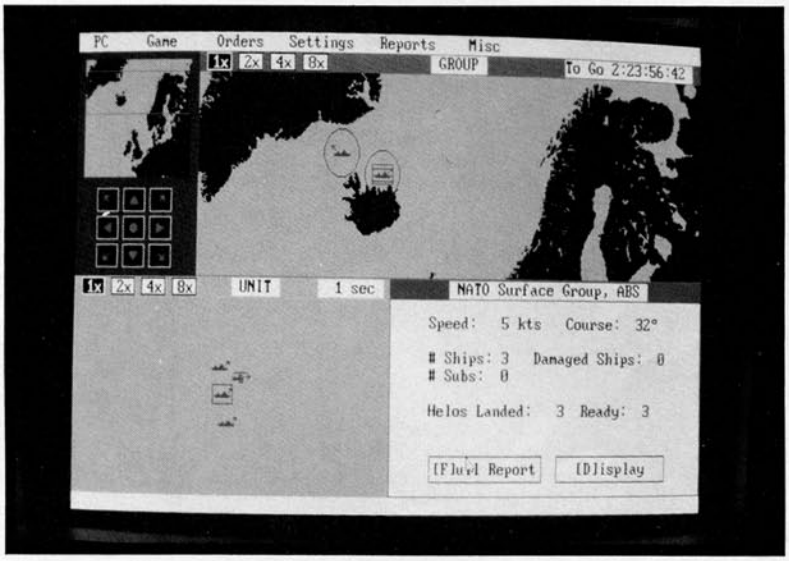
Politically, one may question whether Sweden would permit regimental Soviet air elements to overfly its territory. Most analysts seem to feel that Sweden would join the NATO ranks, however, this reviewer notes that in World War II, Sweden's neutrality favored the Axis to a large degree. It is not a question of common goals, but rather a realistic *Weltanschauung* (world view). Such political considerations are beyond the scope of *Harpoon*, but a sophisticated Soviet player will take advantage of Sweden's enforced "neutrality".

Correspondingly, the NATO player may be unable to achieve a 360-degree AEW (Airborne Early Warning), but he should place his assets in the most likely threat axis and then occasionally patrol in the "back doors" to prevent the Icelandic Pearl Harbor.

Examine assets carefully, and re-arm where necessary. For example, Phantom interceptors may be initially loaded out for strike missions. Since NATO will have sufficient time to rearm for strike missions later, such fighters should be used

in their interceptor role. The NATO defensive posture mandates maximization of CAP and air-to-air superiority missions.

The most dangerous threat to aircraft are other aircraft. Submarines can do nothing and surface vessels may have extensive anti-air armaments, but they lack the speed to seize the initiative. A SAG (surface action group) may indeed pose a threat to one's bases, but airpower should pinpoint it sufficiently removed so that the defensive air strike elements will have time for at least three full mission strikes (returning to base for refueling and ordnance).



In the *Harpoon* environment, all aircraft are FMC (Fully Mission Capable). There are no down-times for maintenance, glitches or gremlins; thus, one will have the use of all potentially available aircraft—a somewhat optimistic rendering.

After a strike, use the unit menu to determine the actual damage done to the enemy. If weapons or sensors have been destroyed/damaged, then a follow-on strike is that much easier to accomplish.

Again, remember CAP, CAP, CAP!! Pulling a MacArthur (i.e. getting caught with one's planes on the ground like Douglas MacArthur did in the Philippines on 8 December 1941) is inexcusable.

AEW (Airborne Early Warning):

NATO has a tremendous advantage in AEW platforms and capabilities; make sure to use it. In a defensive role (defending a land base), there is no reason to maintain electronic silence. Use AEW assets (E2C Hawkeye, E-3 Sentry, Nimrod MR.2 and even P-3C Orion and S-3 Viking) to fly high and radiate loudly when land-based. It's not as if the Soviets lack map capabilities; they know where the base is, and the electronic emissions will let them know that a route is "guarded".

Of course, an intelligent Soviet player will use his interceptors (e.g. SU-24 Fencer, SU-27 Flanker) to destroy the AEW planes/helos early. The AEW assets are a high-priority target. Protect them. If an interceptor is closing, pull the AEW back and send out an interceptor mission.

Sub-Surface Warfare

ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare): While NATO plane assets are long-ranging (Nimrod MR.2, P-3C Orion, S-3 Viking), it is better to use them for patrolling, finding and fixing enemy submarines. Then, use helicopters to close upon and destroy the enemy. ASW operations should be planned through use of the Formation Editor, but remember to widen the zone size. Airplanes should be used for multi-sector patrols, since their endurance allows broader coverage and detection opportunities, while helicopters in a multi-sector patrol spend too much time traversing the area and not enough time actually "dipping" for enemy subs.

Try to attack enemy submarines with at least two helicopters. Attempt to close the range (even if this means cancelling proposed firing missions), since a torpedo dropped virtually on top of a submarine allows the enemy little time for evasive maneuvering.

Submarine Operations: Submarines—the scourge of the seas! There is no good defense against a torpedo other than to destroy the submarine before it launches. Otherwise, one must utilize fast evasion and/or thermocline adjustment (the latter pertains to submarines only). Once a submarine is detected, it is difficult to escape, although it can be done. In *Harpoon 1.1*, CAESAR (the Soviet underwater sensor system), has been "toned down", since its initial rendition proved too effective. Scenario 12 (Attack the Bastions) proved extremely difficult for NATO, since Soviet detections were usually successful—even when an improved Los Angeles class was creeping at 5 knots! Experienced naval officers feel that such a vessel would be virtually undetectable by Soviet sensors.

If using nuclear release, it would behoove the NATO player to target Murmansk early. A quick and total destruction of such a base would severely denigrate Soviet ASW assets.

While the submarine can be directed to a speed of zero knots, there is no difference in detection between "Stop" and "Creep" (5 knots). In reality, a submarine cannot cease movement; like a shark, it must keep moving in order to maintain its trim—a complete cessation of movement would force either upward or downward movement. Since the slowest an actual submarine would ever move is 3 knots, there is no reason to use the "Stop" speed selection.

Offensively a single submarine can destroy an enemy fleet. In Scenario 13 (Duel), this reviewer found a Soviet fleet that would virtually track over an improved-Los Angeles. Dropping speed to a minimum, the submarine waited until the enemy fleet ranged between 4 and 12 nautical miles, whereupon every possible missile and torpedo was launched. Net result: 9 out of 10 Soviet vessels sunk (including a Kirov battle cruiser) without a single retaliatory effort. Mr. Walton has assured this reviewer that the AI (artificial intelligence) has been tightened so that while such a devastating strike may well occur, the enemy vessels would also bring down "a world of hurt" upon the submarine. Even so, such a correlation-of-forces loss ratio is extremely attractive!

Note that submarines at "Deep" level can launch missiles; in reality, such vessels would have to come to "Shallow" level before achieving launch status. However, memory limitations prevented such action (perhaps in Version 2.0 or the proposed on-line multi-player rendition).

Surface Warfare

Missile Warfare: Missiles are the weapons of choice. Close to the proper distance and let fly. However, economy of force does not apply to naval engagements; the goal is to overload enemy directors and allow missiles to penetrate the defensive shields. Firing several rounds of a few missiles allows the enemy fleet to mass fires against the incoming missiles, while a massive round will generate several "leakers".

Gun Warfare: The *Harpoon* player who does not know what he is doing will utilize gunfire. It is close-ranged and generally costly to both sides. While the Soviet navy outguns its NATO counterparts (in both throw-weight and number/size of barrels), even they would prefer to destroy the enemy by missile fire.

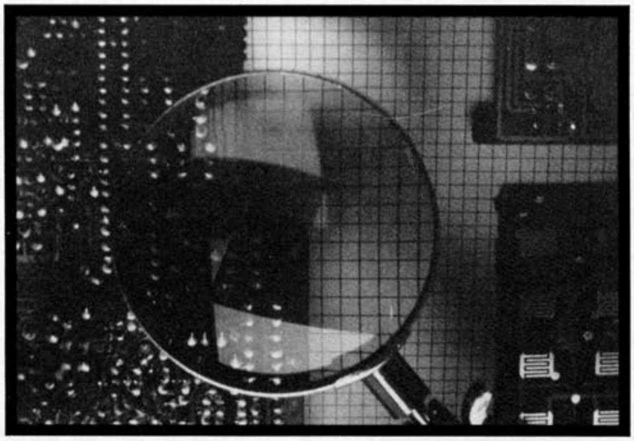
A NATO player purposely engaging in a gun duel is yielding the initiative. There is no excuse for such action other than the

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The Circuit Writer

Who's In Charge Of Graphics Standards Anyway?

by Steve Witzel



Steve Witzel is primarily responsible for the technological innovations currently taking place at Access Software. In this first installment of a limited series, Steve offers some history and insight regarding IBM graphics.

In the beginning (at least, on the IBM PC), there were *no* graphics. Soon there were several clone machines available, each with their own colorless graphic standard *[Ed: Or should that be sub-standard?]*. After a short time, there emerged a de facto monochrome graphics standard, Hercules graphics. For game players, monochrome was about as exciting as watching paint dry.

Unwitting PC owners were about to begin trading in their old green screens for "COLOR". Too bad IBM didn't set their standards any higher. The Color Graphics Adapter (CGA) had a walloping four colors on the screen at one time! Although the four colors were useful for graphs drawn by **Lotus'** *1-2-3* program, most game software developers were not quite ready to take the PC seriously.

After CGA had been around for a couple of years, it was again time to take the old monitor and graphics card back to your favorite retailer for a trade-in, because the Enhanced Graphics Adapter (EGA) standard had become available. Once home, it became apparent that the EGA card you bought had only 64K of memory on board and couldn't be upgraded (Too bad no one told you that there were two sizes of memory banks available for EGA). So after a few months, you're back at the dealer's to get a new 64K EGA card that can be upgraded to 128K. The dealer installs the extra memory. Lucky for you, the same monitor will work with the new card. Now there are lots of games to use on your computer. The graphics aren't great, but they are a significant improvement. Most software manufacturers are now beginning to convert more and more of their programs to the PC format.

Things are wonderful in PC game land until the rumblings begin about VGA graphics. Well, you say to yourself, it's my duty to keep up with the latest graphics standards. You sell your old 128K EGA card to a friend. You buy a new VGA card with 128K of memory, expandable to 256K (you assume this is the last time you'll have to buy a graphics card). Then you discover that your old monitor doesn't work with VGA! Back to the store to buy that new *analog VGA* monitor, and you're in business again.

The new graphics look fantastic. Now, you have a full 256 colors instead of 16. It looks almost as good as TV (if you squint and stand back about 10 feet). You start playing the great new games. Software manufacturers are now starting to design games for the PC first, then convert them to other formats. Things have changed for the better in PC land, until a new VGA game you buy doesn't work on your machine. A call to the manufacturer confirms your suspicion. The VGA card needs to be upgraded to 256K of memory. Due to your foresight when you bought the card, a quick trip to the dealer for a few RAM chips is all that is needed.

"I'll never need to upgrade my graphics system again," you think to yourself. Too bad you weren't aware that some hardware manufacturers were starting to release *Super VGA* graphics cards. "Well it's been a year or two since I bought the VGA card, and it's my duty to keep up with the latest technology," you sheepishly tell your spouse. So off to the dealer again for a new Super VGA card with 512K memory. "Now I've got it all," you think. "What could be better than graphics that are an amazing 1024 by 768 in 16 colors!" The only problem now is that the pictures on the monitor are a little fuzzy in the Super VGA mode. "Well," you think, "just one last monitor and there is absolutely nothing more to buy!"

In just eight years you've had five graphics cards and four different monitors. That's not too bad for a technology freak, especially since there are no more graphics standards expected in the future.

Meanwhile, unknown to you, something peculiar was happening at COMDEX. Several manufacturers were showing the most spectacular graphics images on small computers. This standard is different. It doesn't even have a name this time, only a number: 8514 graphics.

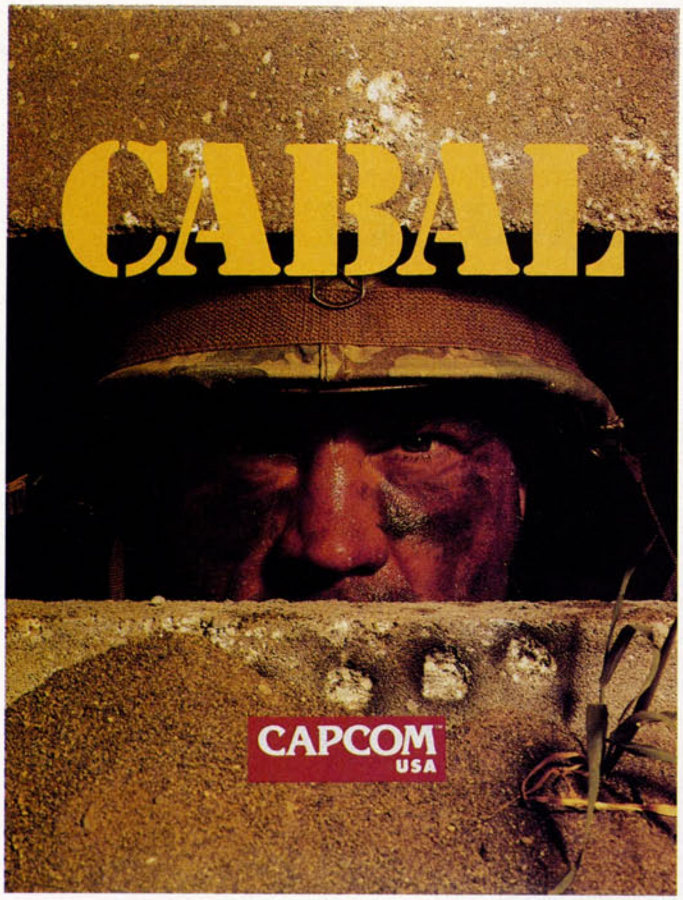
Most VGA monitors don't have the resolution to handle 8514. Only a few VGA monitors have the resolution to handle 8514 graphics with its 1024 by 768 pixels in breathtaking 256 colors. If you are lucky, you have such a monitor. Of course, you also have a memory problem. It takes lots of memory to produce these TV like images and the animations are consequently slower than VGA images. So, once you get the 8514 graphics card and monitor, you begin to feel that you need to put them in a 386 computer!

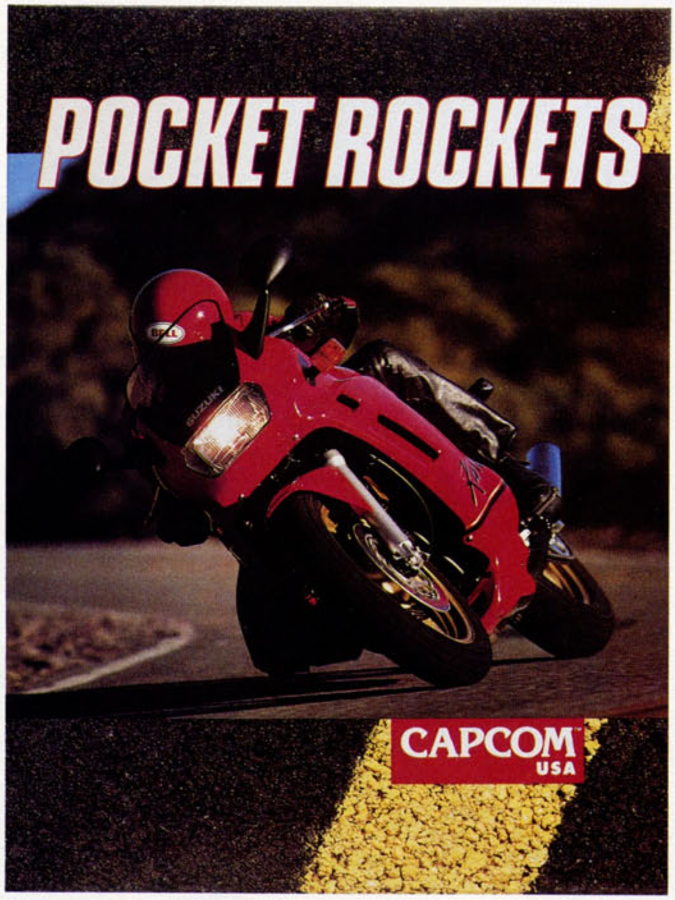
Back to the computer store. On your way, you wonder, "who's in charge of graphics standards anyway?" **CGW**

Here's my recommendation if you're back at the computer looking at computers or graphics upgrades.

Graphics Card: Buy a graphics card that is capable of *Super VGA* graphics, not just VGA. The card will either come with an initial configuration of, or be expandable to, 512K of memory. Be sure to get at least 256K of memory.

Monitor: Get a monitor that is capable of 8514 graphics, right now! There are several on the market and they will cost a few dollars more, but you won't have to upgrade in two years. In the meantime, the VGA graphics will look better than on other monitors.





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The Third Courier

by Dennis Owens

Night. The Templehof District. Rain was beating on the bricks in the buildings as casually as a KGB agent might interrogate a suspect.

My right hand rested on my Walther PPK in my trenchcoat pocket. I was supposed to meet William Martin, ex-close friend, ex-co-worker for "The Company", near the Brandenburg Gates, at precisely 9:52.

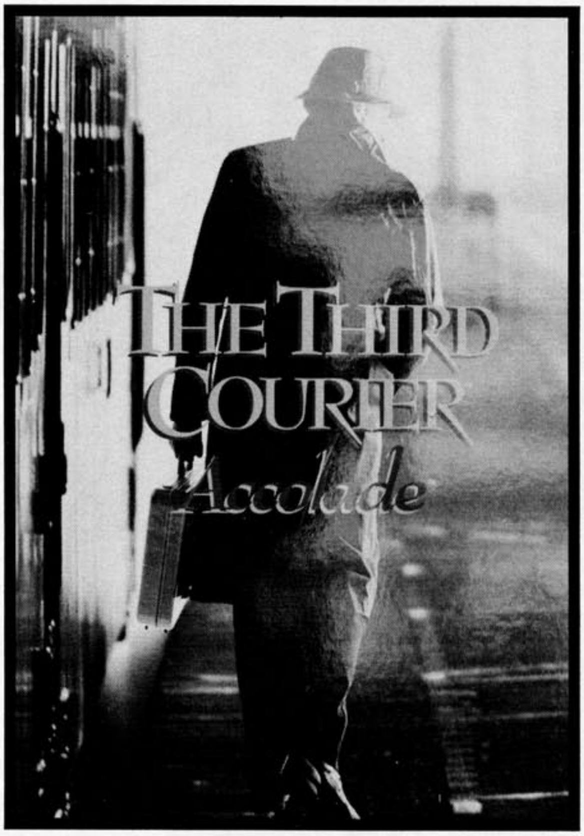
He was nowhere to be seen.

I saw a man walking toward me.

It wasn't Martin.

He wasn't carrying the briefcase with the NATO plans.

As he raised what looked like an umbrella, pointed it in my direction and sighted along its handle, I heard the low muffled growl of the silencer in its tip and dove behind the vacant hurdy-gurdy man's cart and pulled out my Walther. I suddenly realized that Martin probably wouldn't be showing up. Anywhere. Ever again.



TITLE:	The Third Courier
SYSTEMS:	Apple IIGS, IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Carol and Ivan Manley
PUBLISHER:	Accolade San Jose, CA

Accolade's *The Third Courier* is a slam-bang superspy adventure story set among the streets of West Berlin, a West Berlin laid out with the kind of detail used for the streets of Manhattan in the old *Amnesia* game and featuring encounters as dangerous as those to be found in the avenues of Tangramayne.

The player's character (codenamed "Moondancer") must try to resolve the mystery of the disappearance of the three couriers who were carrying, respectively, critical components of NATO non-nuclear defense plans to a top-secret conference in Brussels. While attempting to accomplish this, the player's character must contend with foul-tempered beggars, seedy drunks and knife-wielding muggers while exploring West Berlin and attempting to pick up the trail of each of the couriers.

Aided by his computer, answering machine, weapons, technological gadgets and *very few* clues supplied by Mission Support, Moondancer has only seven days (in game time) to recover the vital components before the scheduled conference in Brussels (ensuring continued world peace). *The Third Courier* becomes, therefore, a race against that dreaded real-time concept and forces one to explore the city, make all of the important contacts, and discover and untangle the inevitable red herrings, as well as threaten and bully one's way past unsuspecting innocents and not-so unsuspecting bad guys, before the time is up.

Blown Cover (Disappointments)

Although the mystery is tight and the fiction is consistent, the mechanics of gameplay leave much to be desired. For instance, much of the game is menu-driven, but even though *The Third Courier* supports mouse, joystick or keyboard interface, the mouse pointer moves so inexorably slowly toward the menu that valuable game-minutes just keep ticking off before the pointer can even reach the menu in order to access it (This reviewer had the lugubrious mouse problem, even on a 33 Mhz machine). Meanwhile, muggers, assassins or even beggars can be pummeling "Moondancer"'s body or filling it full of laser-targeted holes.

Another problem is that, though a simple map of West and East Berlin is provided with the game, the only important location marked on it is that of the player's character's apartment. It was, obviously, a conscious design decision for the player to have to waste valuable game time by simply exploring the city. There may be some validity in this decision, but shouldn't the character have known, at least, where Mission Support was located? Why a superspy would not have known the location of the local headquarters for his organization is absolutely beyond this reviewer.

At any rate, what this design decision necessitates is that the player approach the game unrealistically. First, the player saves the character and spends a few "lives" in walking around and figuring out where everything is. So much for suspension of disbelief. Frankly, in a game of this type, which depends so heavily on tight timetables and provides only a limited amount of time to begin with, such a design parameter seems nearly unforgivable.

Another questionable design decision relates to the use of violence in the game. The only efficient way (at least, without wasting valuable Deutschmarks) to get rid of a drunk or a beggar is to threaten him and it seems like this kind of Experience Point fodder confronts one's character all too frequently. One must wonder why the interaction with NPCs is so limited to the big four options: run, fight, chat and threaten.

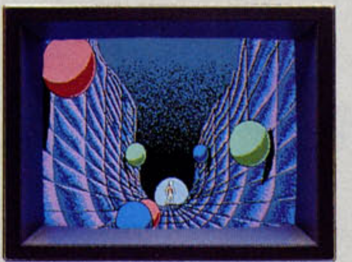
Spy Hooks (Innovations)

The Third Courier does feature some innovative concepts. For example, it offers the player a chance to fine-tune "Moondancer" during the character creation segment by choosing from various character traits, occupations and leisure activities (everything from partying to woodworking). Four different agents can be saved to disk (for future play), but only one can be used at a time.

Unfortunately, this writer found little difference in gameplay between being a young farming, hunter/mechanic type or an old urban card-playing librarian. Though the numerical character traits (standard intelligence, strength and health gauges, etc.) vary depending on the character's background, very little else seems to. Also, although experience points and "grade levels" (i.e.

Continued on page 26

Actual IBM EGA Graphics Screens



Dirk the Daring in his quest to rescue the lovely Princess Daphne.



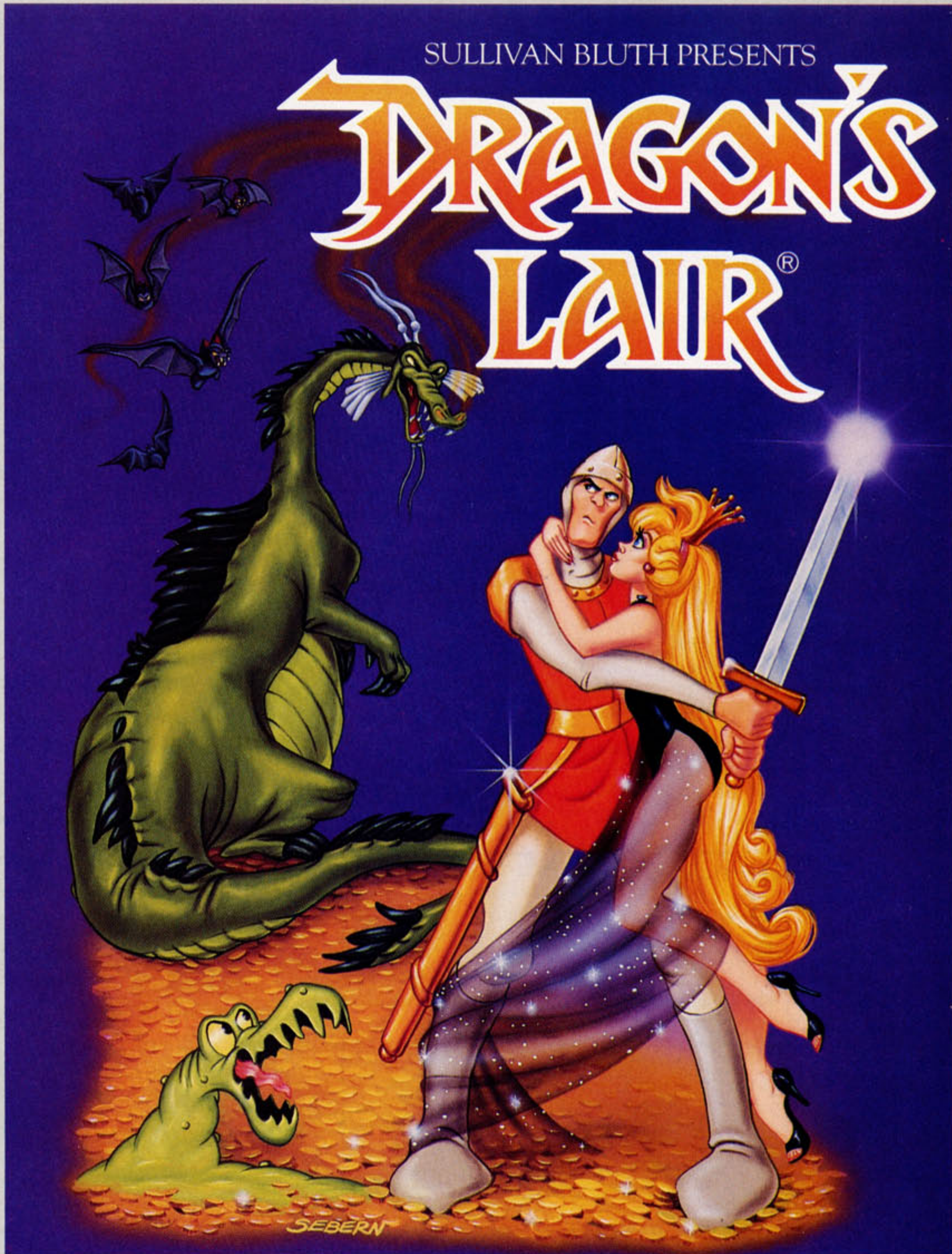
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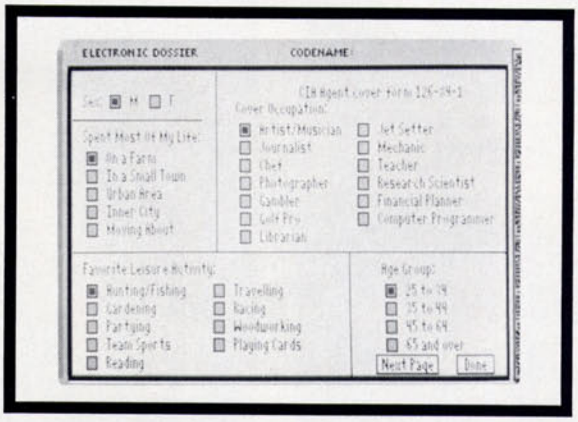
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Third Courier

Continued from page 24

sleuth, agent, etc.) are important in determining what level of weaponry sophistication the character can utilize, the seem to matter very little beyond that.

Another change from the standard CRPG is a simpler and less-effective one. Movement, instead of being handled by a "key cluster" (such as i/j/k/l or w/a/s/d) is via the first letters of each of the compass directions (i.e. n/s/e/w). While this change might seem more intuitive, in practice it seems rather clunky and slows down the character's movement. Experienced gamers will probably dislike this change, others may prefer it.

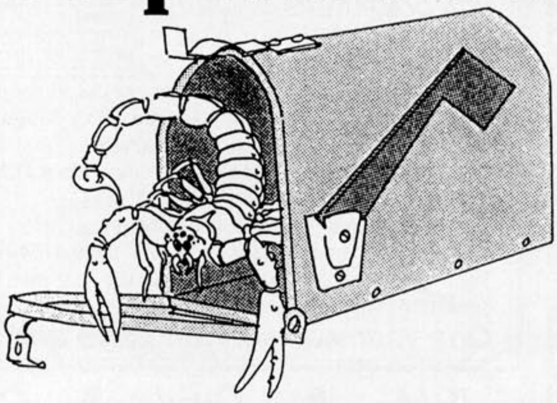


Newer versions of *The Third Courier* support **Ad Lib** and **CMS** sound boards. All IBM versions support hard drives and VGA (requires 512K, however).

Debriefing

In closing, *The Third Courier* should have been the sophisticated rock and rolling superspy story that it wants to be (indeed, its fiction is strong and its puzzles are tricky). Instead, its mechanics make it awkward and slow. It is recommended only for superspies who cannot wait for the next Robert Ludlum novel and gamers who don't mind "fudging" with the system in order to have a reasonable chance at succeeding in the game. **CGW**

Scorpion's Mail



Warning: Scorpion's Mail contains specific hints on games. Gentle readers who eschew hints should avoid this column.

Once again, we take a trip into the back room for a peek into the old mailbag. It's just as crowded as ever (someday I'll have to build an addition to this place), but I think there's just enough room to squeeze in (into the room, not the mailbag! grin). Before we get to the good stuff, though, I have a few things to say about SASE's.

At the end of every column, I mention that anyone living in the United States must enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if they want a reply to their questions. Yet each month, without fail, several letters will come in without a SASE. Those letters just don't get answered.

Even a SASE, however, is no guarantee if the address on it is wrong. Jamie E. in Milwaukee, my reply to you came back to my box stamped "No such address". There was no return address on your original envelope to check against, so you never received an answer.

There was also one reader who put his name but my box number on his SASE. Unfortunately, I didn't catch that, since usually I only look at the names when inserting replies. A few days later, there it was in my box. Luckily, he had a return address on his original envelope and so, I was able to get his response on its way.

So folks, before you go rushing to the post office, take a few moments to be sure everything is right. Make certain that a SASE is enclosed with your letter and that your address on it is correct. Also, put your return address on the original envelope, just in case (besides, stamps have been known to fall off, too). Ok? Now, let's go look in the bag.

Ultima V: Queries keep coming in about the mysterious glass sword. Yes, it does exist and no, you don't need it to finish the game. If you killed something with the sword and it broke, it isn't the end of the world. There is a rumor (which may even be true; I've never checked it out) that the sword is useful against Shadowlords. It will not, however, do anything to Blackthorn.

Might & Magic II: A number of people are having trouble getting the code word accepted by the machine at the very end of the game. They have the right word, but it doesn't seem to work. That word has to start with a capital letter (don't ask me why, that's just how it is).

Dragon Wars: There have been many letters about problems with inventory control, which is not surprising. What to keep and what to dump is not easy to decide, especially when the game itself gives little information on various items. The first thing to do is to get the object identified. If it's marked as "priceless", it is either completely worthless or has some important function in the game (solving a puzzle, for instance). If you've found a use for it, you can usually drop it afterwards. The signet ring is the only item that is useful in more than one place. Dead parrots, on the other hand (as any Monty Python fan knows) aren't good for anything. With magic items, your only recourse is to save the game and experiment until you figure out what they do. Armor is simpler. Wear the best and sell the rest. The same holds true for weapons, although there again some experimenting is necessary to determine which ones work better for you. Don't be afraid to fool around with the things you find. After all, that's what saved games are for! (grin)

Magic Candle: Some folks are in a rush to get their charisma rating up, and are encountering difficulties (also known as extremely nasty critters). Slow down a little! This is a big game with plenty to do in it. The charisma teacher won't disappear, nor will all those rude people who won't talk to you yet. If you go too fast, you can easily miss something important. The best thing to do is to take your time and be thorough. Remember, you can always go back to a town again later. And for those who have been asking, Dermagud is *certainly* the first dungeon you should attempt.

Leisure Larry III: If you're having problems with becoming better acquainted (ahem!) with Tawni, you might want to think about what would appeal to someone who is an inveterate shopper (especially when you don't have any cash on hand). For those who can't seem to get a certain locker open, be aware that (a) the combination is determined randomly each time (save the game when you find it) and (b) the names have definite relationships to numbers, and haven't you seen those names somewhere else?

Hero's Quest: Some people are having a hard time with the secret entrance to the brigand fortress. First, you won't be able to get in at all until you've rescued the baron's son (well, you could try rushing the front, but I don't recommend it). Then, you need to read a certain message (which only appears after you've rescued him). Finding the message is the tricky part, as it only shows up in the morning, so keep your eye on the time of day. As to where the baron's son is, well, I don't think I could bear to tell you.

Wizardry V: Several readers have written to advise me that there is a way of opening the chained door (originally mentioned in Dec. '89 issue), and that the needed item is not too far away on the same level. They are quite right; I had completely forgotten about that (for shame, Scorp! You of all people!). Thanks to all of you who pointed that out to me.

Wasteland: I've heard from some people who are having trouble getting the password for Savage Village. They've climbed the hill many times, but no password. Well, I don't know why it won't show up, but there's something else you can do: blast the Village gate open with explosives. That will certainly work, and save you some time as well.

That's about it for this month's mailbag. If you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways: On Delphi, stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie, visit the Games Roundtable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (remember what I said above about SASE's): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

 CGW

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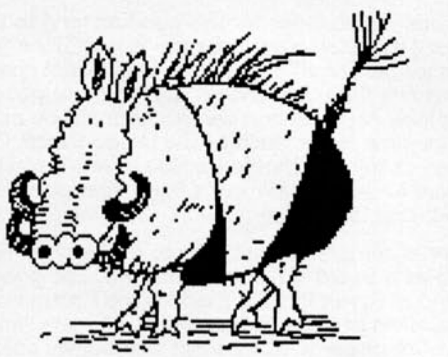
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Scorpion's View

Continued from page 18

However, while these changes have an effect on the individual characters, they have none whatsoever in terms of game play. That is, you don't need a particular type of Dwarf or Elf to talk to someone, or to get you through an encounter. Knights of all orders are treated exactly the same, although there is one time in the game where having a Knight (of any order) is an absolute necessity.

Since a sequel is planned, it may be that the different Elven and Dwarven races, and the different Knight orders, will be a factor then. With that in mind, you might want to have one of each Elf and Dwarf in your party. For this game, though, it isn't all that important.

Once your party is created, you begin play at an outpost held by the Solmanic Knights. Here the characters equip themselves, on a somewhat marginal level, as there isn't much for sale. Only a small selection of weapons and armor are available. Enough to get you started, but not much more than that. Better items come later, either gleaned from defeated opponents or purchased in a large town.



When the group is ready, you begin a series of missions assigned by the commandants of the outposts (there is more than one), starting with the investigation of the nearby town of Throtl. The game is, therefore, somewhat linear in nature. Of course, you can always poke around where you haven't yet been sent, but save first, in case of unpleasant surprises.

Combat, as mentioned earlier, is the major activity, and boasts a new feature: the ability to set the difficulty level of the opponents. The levels range from Novice (very easy) to Champion (really hard), for a total of five in all. What changing the level does is to modify the number of hitpoints your opponents have. More hitpoints means they are harder to kill,and 3therefore you get more experience for the battle. Fewer hitpoints makes them easier to kill, and you get less experience.

Aside from that, the basic fighting mechanics have not changed from the previous games. Spellcasting, movement, attacks, etc. are all handled in familiar fashion. However, the speed has increased markedly. While the program still polls each monster individually, it is far quicker than before, making combat much faster, at least in the IBM version.

Most of the critters are familiar ones: hobgoblins, minotaurs, evil mages and clerics, fighters, ogres, giants, ghouls, and so on. However, since the game is set in the Dragonlance world, you'd expect to run across some dragons, and you'd be right: dragons, mostly evil, pop up now and then to make your life miserable.

More numerous, though, are the Draconians, humanoid dragon men created from the corrupted eggs of good dragons. There are five types, all of them nasty and with special abilities to set your teeth on edge.

Baaz are the most common. They're pretty ordinary, except that when they die, they turn to stone and might pull a weapon from a character's hand. Kapaks are worse; they secrete a poison that can paralyze a character on contact. Bozaks are spell-casters, especially fond of lightning bolts. They also explode when they die, damaging anyone, friend or foe, who is next to them. Sivaks have no special power, but are able to attack three times on their turn.

Worst of all are the Auraks, of which, fortunately, there are few in the game. Aside from being spell-casters, they don't die easily. After being reduced to 0 or less hitpoints, they "come back" in another form. In this form, they cannot be killed, as it is a type of energy. Of course, this energy form is perfectly capable of attacking, and does so. All that can be done is to move your characters around and wait for the Aurak to blow itself up, which will happen after a few rounds.

During the game, several characters from the Dragonlance novels—Caramon, Tanis, and Tasselhoff—make cameo appearances. None of them joins your party for fighting purposes, although Tas is with you through much of the endgame. There are other NPC's you can take on for brief periods, but none of them will stay with you for very long. In general, you are pretty much on your own.

While the game is pretty standard fare overall, in spite of the modifications, it does have a new feature not found in the others: experience is occasionally given for non-combat activities. While these instances are few and far between, it's a nice change to be rewarded for doing something other than fighting.

On the other hand, there are a few things that aren't quite so nice. The first one is that no experience is ever given to a character who is knocked out in combat. I don't mean killed and needing resurrection, just brought down to unconsciousness. Whether it happens on the first round or the last one makes no difference: he or she gets nothing.

This violates the spirit of AD&D, in which all surviving characters share equally (or as equally as possible) in the post-combat rewards. There is no justification for denying experience to characters who have otherwise done well but have had the bad luck to be knocked out during combat. This practice becomes even sillier when you realize that a character who is paralyzed on the first round of combat will get experience, even though he has done absolutely nothing during the fight.

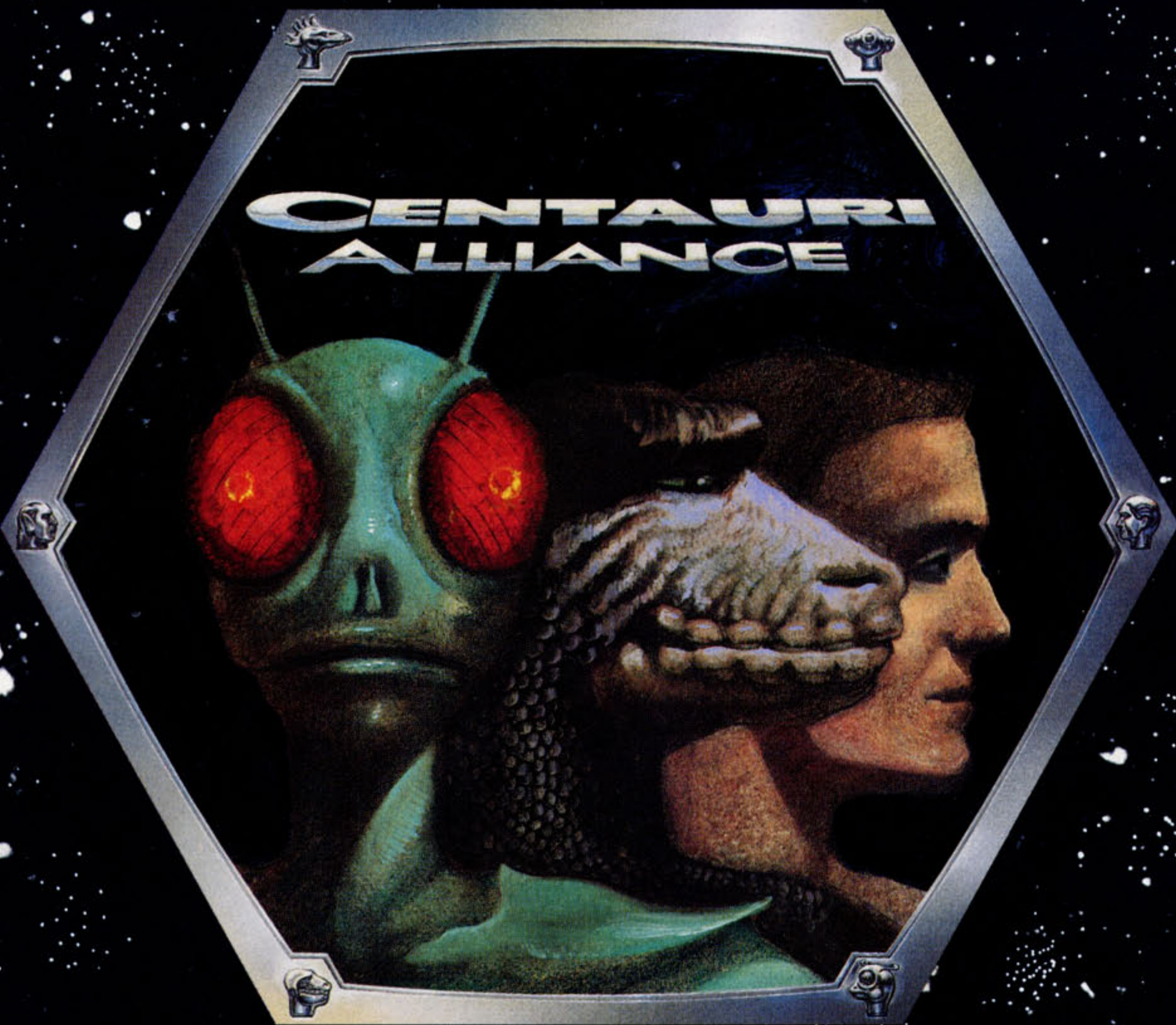
The second blot is the taking away of some items at the end of the scenario. You don't have any choice in the matter, it's done automatically. It is generally a mark of poor planning, and of little regard for the player's satisfaction, to take away hard-won items.

The usual specious explanations for this conduct tend to be "Well, we don't want the characters to be too powerful" or "You'll get something better next time". If designers don't want characters to be too powerful, then they should not hand out powerful items in the first place. An exception can occasionally be made for very special, one time items, such as the Dragonlance. Other than that, however, characters should be able to retain what they have fought so hard to get. If that means fewer special items, this is still better than losing them all.

By the way, "special items" does not refer to the fairly mundane magical stuff such as a sword +1 or ring mail +2. The goodies removed at the end of Krynn include (besides the Footman's Dragonlance): gauntlets of Ogre Power, a belt of Frost Giant strength, a cloak of displacement, a periapt of proof vs. poison, and a mace of disruption. Quite a list of potent items, some of which should probably not have appeared in a low-level game to begin with. More thought needs to be given by the designers as to what specials will appear, keeping particularly in mind that such specials ought not to be taken away at the end.

Finally, the endgame comes upon you as a surprise, and this

Continued on page 57



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The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first person perspectives of real world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take your alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventures (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

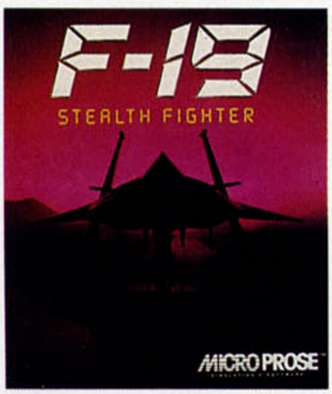
Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of this specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machine	Cat.	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Their Finest Hour*	*LucasFilm*	*I*	*AC,SI*	*68*	*10.65*
2.	*Starflight 2*	*EA*	*I*	*RP*	*32*	*10.05*
3.	*F-19 Stealth Fighter*	*MicProse*	*I*	*SI*	*87*	*9.86*
4.	*SimCity*	*Maxis*	*Many*	*ST,SI*	*101*	*9.83*
5.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicProse*	*I*	*SI,WG*	*68*	*9.78*
6.	*Populous*	*EA*	*Am,I,ST*	*ST*	*92*	*9.66*
7.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*I*	*SI*	*46*	*9.65*
8.	*Hero's Quest*	*Sierra*	*I*	*AD*	*39*	*9.38*
9.	*Red Storm Rising*	*MicProse*	*C,I,ST*	*SI*	*69*	*9.22*
10.	*Battlehawks 1942*	*LucasFilm*	*Am,I,ST*	*AC,SI*	*85*	*9.21*

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
11.	Lords of Rising Sun	Cnmwre	Am	AC,ST	54	9.19
12.	Sword of Aragon	SSI	I	ST,WG	33	9.15
13.	MechWarrior	Activision	I	SI,RP	41	9.12
14.	Chessmaster 2100	Toolworks	Many	ST	38	9.11
15.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	Ap,C	RP	27	9.04
	Wasteland	EA	Ap,C,I	RP	120	9.04
17.	Bard's Tale III	EA	Ap,C	RP	74	9.03
	Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	I	AD	29	9.03
	Ultima V	Origin	Ap,I	RP	102	9.03
20.	Space Quest III	Sierra	Am,I,ST	AD	34	8.97
21.	Romance/3Kngdms	Koei	Am,I	ST,RP	31	8.96
22.	Overrun	SSI	Ap,C	WG	24	8.93
23.	Indy: Adventure	LucasFilm	Am,I	AD	23	8.93
24.	Sword of Samurai	MicProse	I	ST,RP	44	8.92
25.	Falcon	SpcHolo	Many	SI	62	8.90
26.	A-10 Tank Killer	Dynamix	I	SI	40	8.88
27.	NFL Challenge	XOR	I,M	ST	86	8.87
28.	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	Ap,C,I	RP	54	8.81
29.	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	Ap,C,I	RP	43	8.80
30.	Genghis Khan	Koei	I	ST,RP	32	8.79
	Project Stealth Ftr	MicProse	C	SI	29	8.79
32.	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	30	8.77
	Battletech	Infocom	Am,I,ST	RP	48	8.77
	Fire Brigade	Panther	Am,I,M	WG	22	8.77
35.	Airborne Ranger	MicProse	C,I,ST	AC	74	8.76
	F-15 Strk Eagle 2	MicProse	I	SI	57	8.76
37.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	Many	AD	58	8.75
38.	Neuromancer	Interplay	Ap,C,I	AD	33	8.70
39.	Battlechess	Interplay	Am,I,ST	ST	58	8.68
40.	Curse of Azure Bonds	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	70	8.67
	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	Ap,C	WG	43	8.67
42.	Ballistyx	Psygns	Am,I,ST	AC	20	8.65
	Police Quest II	Sierra	I,GS,ST	AD	43	8.65
	Zany Golf	EA	Am,I,ST	AC	31	8.65
45.	Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	Am,I	AC,ST	38	8.64
46.	Sword of Sodan	Discovery	Am,GS	AC	27	8.63
	Knights of Legend	Origin	Ap,C,I	RP	20	8.63
48.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	116	8.61
49.	It Came From Desert	Cnmwre	Am	AD	35	8.56
50.	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	I	ST,RP	51	8.53
51.	Carrier Command	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC,WG	49	8.51
	Panzer Strike	SSI	Ap,C	WG	68	8.51
53.	Silent Service	MicProse	Many	SI	257	8.50
54.	Hostage	Mindscape	Am,I,ST	AC	28	8.47
55.	688 Attack Sub	EA	I	SI,ST	48	8.42

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Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
	Manhunter 2	Sierra	I,M,ST	AD	31	8.42
57.	DeathTrack	Activision	I	AC	25	8.41
58.	TV Sports Football	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	AC,ST	50	8.39
59.	Arkanoid	Dsc/Taito	Many	AC	69	8.38
	Wings of Fury	Brodbnd	Ap	AC	52	8.38
61.	Strike Fleet	EA	Ap,C,I	WG	79	8.37
62.	Rocket Ranger	Cnmwre	Am,ST	AC,AD	75	8.32
63.	Modem Wars	EA	C,I	ST	24	8.29
64.	Manhunter	Sierra	Many	AD	72	8.25
65.	Police Quest	Sierra	Many	AD	98	8.23
66.	Starglider II	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC	65	8.22
67.	Jack Nicklaus' Golf	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cnmwre	Am,C,GS	AC	68	8.21
69.	Leisure Suit Lry II	Sierra	Many	AD	52	8.20
70.	Battlegroup	SSI	Ap,C	WG	36	8.19
71.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	I	AC,SI	31	8.16
72.	Tetris	SpcHolo	Many	AC,ST	46	8.13
73.	Vette!	SpcHolo	I	AC	26	8.12
74.	Stealth Mission	Sublogic	C	SI	36	8.11
75.	Shiloh	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	54	8.09
	Zork Series	Infocom	Many	AD	218	8.09
T 77.	Faery Tale Adventure	Micllsn	Many	RP	59	8.07
78.	Speedball	Cnmware	Many	AC	35	8.06
79.	Mean Streets	Access	C,I	AD	29	8.05
	Russia	SSG	Ap,C	WG	61	8.05
81.	Sentinel Worlds	EA	C,I	RP	71	8.04
	Techno-Cop	Epyx	C,ST	AC	23	8.04
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Top Strategy



Top Action/Arcade



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Breach of Conflict

Omnitrend's "Breach 2"

by Chris Lombardi

The UDP scout ship had fought valiantly against the FW cruiser, making the large, poorly maneuverable ship pay for its weakness with many well-placed laser shots. In the end, the cruiser won because of its more formidable strength, trapping the scout in its tractor beam. Once the beam had locked on to the squirming scout, the cruiser reeled it in like an ancient Terran angler would have played a struggling trout. Now, the scout sat defenseless within the cruiser's belly as welder-bots worked through the bolts of the sealed power door.

Ensign Bardoz and his troops nervously checked equipment as they waited to board the scout when the door begrudgingly opened to the robot's acetylene knock. Bardoz was as green as a T-Rex's belly, his sum total of combat experience at around 15 battle minutes with a pitifully low accuracy rating of 24%, as well. His men were aware of it and he was painfully aware of it. He would have to be the first through the breached accessway if he hoped to gain their trust, and a promotion.

The door fell and the troops ran for the smoke-filled hatchway, their squad leader at the lead. With laser rifle blasting aimlessly, Ensign Bardoz burst through the doorway onto the scout bridge, coming face-to-face with the oddest alien being he'd ever seen. Rising to an incredible 12 feet, the alien turned its full Psionic powers on the hapless rookie. Bardoz froze, his mind yielding to the aliens' superior psyche, rifle clattering noisily on the bridge floor, misfiring into a colorful navigation console. The last thing Bardoz was aware of was a strange alien voice whispering mockingly in his head, "Ah, human minds, what a wonderful thing to waste."



TITLE:	Breach 2
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
REVIEWED ON:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Thomas R. Carbone
PUBLISHER:	Omnitrend Software W. Simsbury, CT

Breach 2 is the sequel to the science fiction, squad level combat game born from the marine boarding sequences of Omnitrend's *Universe 2*. In *Breach* and its new sequel, the player leads a squad of futuristic marines, a la *Aliens*, into a series of campaigns against intelligent enemies, set within Omnitrend's *Universe* fiction. Players assume the persona of a squad leader, fearlessly guiding their marines through battle scenarios, building the squad leaders experience and abilities in a role-playing manner. The novelty of the original *Breach* lay in this unique blend of tactical combat and role-playing.

Though *Breach 2* was completely recoded for this sequel, the game is more of a *Breach 2.0*—an updated version of the original, as it takes the original game system and adds a few needed features, more objects and opponents, and improved graphics and sound. The game retains the mouse driven, icon interface, though it does implement keyboard commands. A combination of both input methods makes for smooth, elegant play, and a significant improvement on the original.

The Sounds of Violence (Graphics and Sound)

The IBM version supports VGA graphics, and the Amiga and ST version take full advantage of their machine's graphics capabilities. The IBM version also supports the Adlib and the CMS music cards. Unfortunately in the IBM version the only time the sound track is heard is during the title sequence and at the end of a successful mission. The rest of the game sounds are basic IBM speaker sounds. This is a familiar trend among IBM sound support. It is difficult to determine if it is programming laziness or irreconcilable technical difficulties, but it would sure be nice if games took full advantage of sound board capabilities (The sounds on the other machines are very well done).

Breach 2 irons out the major design problems in the original program. One of the largest flaws in the original was the lack of diagonal movement, a clumsy omission. Fortunately, *Breach 2* allows diagonal movement, and also allows one to trace a path for each marine rather than to move them step by step.

Also, the original *Breach* was unmerciful when it came to squad leaders. Once a squad leader entered a scenario, it was all or nothing, either the squad leader saw a mission through to its end (whether it ended in success or failure) or he died. It was certainly realistic, but not 'gamer' friendly. If a clumsy squad leader dropped a live grenade on his toe, he was gone for good, along with 20 hours of experience. Gamers handled this the way any self-respecting gamer would—they made back-ups. Thankfully, *Breach 2* avoids this mess and keeps a copy of a squad leader warm and cozy while a clone risks his butt in the battlefield. If the squad leader is 'incapacitated' while on a mission, he is *not* sent to game-character heaven. A well-earned plaudit is due this gamer friendly innovation. Thank you.

Other additions come in the form of new war toys and new opponents. Along with the usual rifles, grenades, and rocket launchers, *Breach 2* offers smoke grenades (for extra cover), neutron bombs (nasty radiation grenades), camouflage suits (renders wearer somewhat invisible), proximity charges (mines), and foxhole makers. These new items add some additional flavor, as well as inviting other interesting scenario possibilities with options like mine fields and heavily entrenched enemy forces.

The new members of the enemy cast now include (in order of appearance): beasts (actually beasts were in the original game but they now look like Tyrannosaurus Rexs), terradons (flying prehistoric creatures), wadgels (sci-fi porcupines), bipeds (mini-mech warriors), robots (robots) and seekers (weird floating orbs that fly through walls and are killed only by remote charges). The basic creatures from the original—marauders, tanks, gun

Continued on page 36

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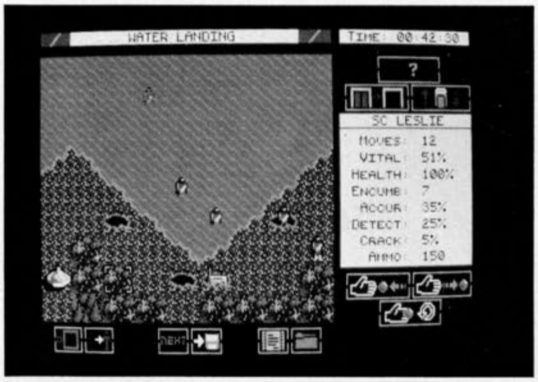
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Continued from page 34

emplacements, and aliens—are all here, but with considerable face-lifts.



Space Cadet Construction Set (Scenario Builder)

When one begins to know the enemies to be found in the eleven pre-designed scenarios on a first name basis, it's obviously time to move on to bigger, brighter things. This is facilitated by the fact that *Breach 2* comes complete with a scenario builder capable of creating customized computer mayhem. The scenario builder is flexible enough to create nearly any sci-fi battle situation one can conjure. In fact, the introductory fiction describes a playing of "Storm Troopers", a not-so-original yet playable creation of my own (with apologies to an obvious source). A simple, one level scenario can easily be assembled in an hour or so.

For those short on time or creativity, Omnitrend plans to publish additional campaign disks for $14.95 each. Campaign Disk #1 is already complete and available through Omnitrend only (not available in stores). Additional scenarios can also be purchased through the Modern Day Publishing Co. These people did a great job of supporting the original *Breach* with several campaign disks and a monthly newsletter, *VidComm*, devoted solely to Omnitrend software. They're offering a free (but $4.95 for shipping and handling) "Azarius Incident Scenario Disk", as well as the "Federation Collection", a seven disk set of scenarios supported by some pretty decent fiction for $59.95.

In addition, Omnitrend is planning exciting things with a system they're calling the *Interlocking Game System* (*IGS*). Using this system, Breachers will be able to play the ship boarding sequence in an upcoming product, *Rules of Engagement* (a tactical ship-to-ship space navy scenario), by using the *Breach 2* system with squad leaders created in the *Breach* world. Omnitrend is also planning a surface assault game which would implement the same system.

So, is the Breach 2(.0) 'upgrade' worth the purchase? It certainly is for those who enjoyed the original. This new, improved version is definitely worthwhile in light of the *IGS* developments. Melding separate game systems in this way offers a welcome flexibility that will certainly increase the depth of both games.

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END DIRECTIVE

OSI recruited two agencies to administer periodic evaluations to determine the quality of tanks produced. Origin Systems, Inc. and Computer Gaming World magazine were chosen to oversee employee evaluations. After review, Origin/CGW determined that in order to rate design and programming prowess they would have prototypes battle each other. These monthly battles, called "Tournament", would provide quantifiable means of rating the engineers who participated. The Origin/CGW plan called for five preliminary tournaments which would determine 30 designers who demonstrated exceptional ability. The first tournament was held in September, 1989. As the tournament began, OSI employees watched as the cybertanks took the field, striving to destroy their opponents. When the last laser had been fired, the cybertank NIMBUS1, designed by Bob Willis had won.

In the months that followed, four other designers achieved victory in the monthly qualifying tournaments. The names of the five engineers and their winning cybertanks are as follows:

September:	Bob Willis	NIMBUS1
October:	Stuart Eastman	SWAN
November:	Steve Huskey	HELIVES
December:	Steven Schafer	STRYKBK2
January:	Robin Kim	TALON-C

The Grand Tournament would prove who was the top cybernetic tank designer. From the five qualifying tournaments, 30 designers had proven their merit and earned the right to participate in the final event. Deep within the OSI complex, the final 30 prototypes were loaded onto the mainframe and the battles were begun. The cybertank designs used in the Grand Tournament were amazing. Some would hide behind buildings, waiting for prey. Others launched a berserk attack, retreating only to repair vital systems. Ultimately, only one could prevail. In a decisive manner, the tank REALSWAN designed by Stuart Eastman, emerged victorious. OSI salutes all engineers who participated in the tournaments and congratulates Stuart Eastman for a job well done. Mr. Eastman will receive an OMEGA trophy, a copy of all Origin games, a custom-designed OMEGA jacket, and a $500 cash prize.

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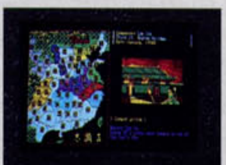
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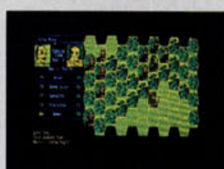
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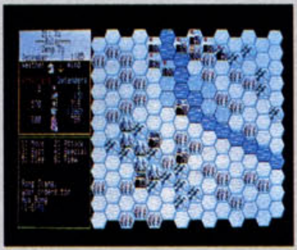
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Abstracts from the Journal of Computer Game Design

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Why Adventure Games Suck

by Ron Gilbert (*Maniac Mansion* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphics Adventure*)

Ron's basic thesis relates to the necessity of "suspension of disbelief" in pulling the gamer into the game and helping them to leave the "real world" behind as they play. He notes that the "suspension of disbelief" disappears every time the player has to restore a saved game or ends up pounding his or her head on the desk in frustration. Therefore, Ron promulgated "Gilbert's Rules of Thumb" for avoiding this disruption in game satisfaction.

1. The final objective needs to be clear: Even if the objective changes in the midst of game, as a result of something that happens to the character or his/her environment, the player needs to be able to have a clear vision of what he or she is actually trying to accomplish. If this is not possible, the player ends up meandering aimlessly and getting more and more frustrated.

2. Even sub-goals need to be obvious: Most adventure games are divided into scenarios with sub-goals. Players may know that the main goal of the game is to rescue the prince, but a player who is trapped on an island may need to be prodded into realizing that it's okay to get off the island in order to advance the story. Players who are unaware of this subgoal may wander about aimlessly looking for the prince on the island and giving up in frustration because they do not realize that it is time to move on. There needs to be a mechanism (sometimes a supporting character) to inform the player what he or she should be doing at a given point in the game.

3. Live and learn: It is a morale problem when players can *only* learn by "dying" and having to reboot. Although danger is inherent in drama, note that danger should be survivable if the player is clever enough.

4. Watch out for "backwards puzzles": It is both more realistic and more satisfying for gamers to find the solution *after* they have found the problem. The problem should challenge the player to *search* for the solution.

5. Avoid the "I forgot to pick it up" syndrome: Players should not have to pick up every item they see and add it to their inventory because it *might* help with a later puzzle. Though this is part of the "backwards puzzle" problem, Gilbert wanted to emphasize this point.

6. Make the puzzles advance the story: Unless solving a puzzle brings the player closer to understanding both the story and the game, it is simply "busy work".

7. Real time gaming offers poor quality drama: Gilbert reasons that "timing" is a vital ingredient to effective drama. He does not address the dreaded "real time-dead time" discussion in this section, but objects to time-based puzzles, especially if the player must fail on several occasions before getting his timing down.

8. There must be incremental rewards: Players need some idea of how they are progressing and they have to have a feeling that they are getting somewhere.

9. Avoid arbitrary puzzles: While puzzles do not have to be obvious, they should make enough sense that the player's first thought upon solving it is, "Of course, why didn't I think of that sooner!" If the solution can only be reached by trial and error (or plain luck), it's a bad puzzle.

10. Reward the player's intent: The design should give the player the benefit of the doubt. It should not be a matter of having a character on just the right pixel in a graphics game or guessing just the right word in a parser-driven game. "If you give the player the benefit of the doubt," Gilbert suggested, "the game will be right more than wrong."

11. Make the events/puzzles consistent: Some games lock out sections of the game universe until certain "Must Do"s are completed. This is fine, but all the "Must Do"s should fit together in a logical way.

12. Give the player lots of options: Gilbert pictures games which are too linear as being analogous to a cage with the player locked into the cage until he or she finds a certain key to get out. He suggests, instead, that designers think of the player as being *outside* the cage and the puzzles being locked within. This way, the gamer would have many more options to think about in terms of what to do next. **CGW**

The article ends with a telling, if cynical observation, "The average American spends most of the day failing at the office, the last thing he wants to do is come home and fail while trying to relax and be entertained."

Toys Versus Puzzles Versus Games

by Chris Crawford (*Balance of Power: 1990*, *Balance of the Planet* and *Guns & Butter*)

In this brief column, Chris Crawford discusses the differences between toys, puzzles and games. He notes that all three have a system, but each treats it differently. A toy presents the system alone, encouraging the user to play with the system in a free-form exploratory manner. If rules and a goal are added to the toy, one gets a puzzle. The puzzle-solver must interact with the system in a more formal and purposeful manner in order to reach the defined goal. Finally, if one adds an opponent who purposefully seeks to foil that goal-reaching, one has a game.

To illustrate the point, he says that a ball is a toy. It rolls and bounces, depending on the way the user plays with it. If one adds a goal and some rules, but no opponent, it becomes a puzzle. Add an opponent, however, and one has a game.

Are You a Crook?

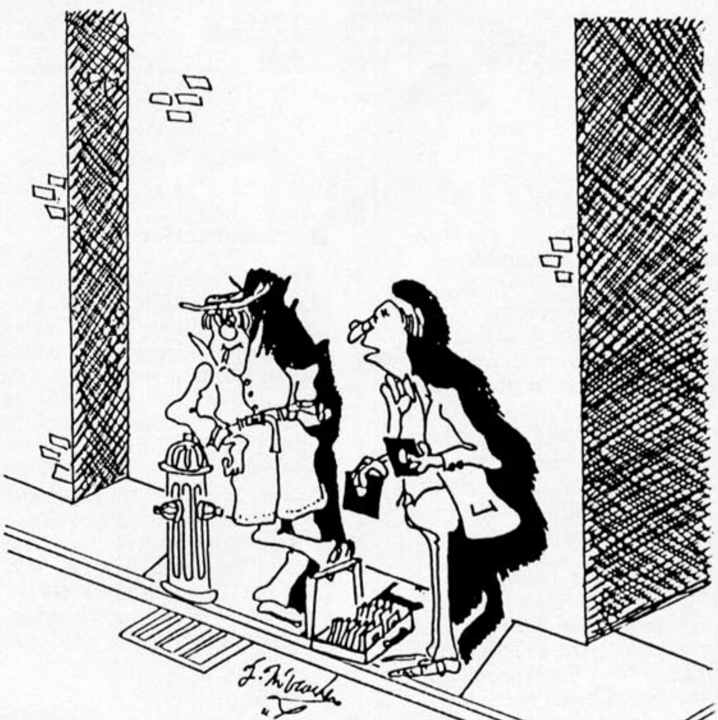
by Richard Mulligan (Product Manager for Games on GEnie)

In this article on software piracy, Mulligan notes that there are many people who steal programs without thinking. He quotes Ralph Bosson, designer of *Under Fire* for **Avalon Hill** and *High Seas* for **Garde'**, as stating, "People who wouldn't take a candy bar out of a drug store think nothing of [piracy]." He went on to say, "We need to redefine the act of 'piracy,' and put the guilt back into it."

Next, he quotes Tony Van of **Mediagenic**'s technical support staff. "If consumers bought the games they normally get from a friend, we'd [software publishers] have more money to put into research and development and, in turn, produce better quality games." Assuming people only give out one copy of every game they buy, Tony's suggestion would certainly make a big difference in a $300 million per year industry.

Then, after talking about professional pirates who steal in order to deal in bulk, he reaches the bottom line. It is an important message, noting that every copy of a game which is handed out to a friend or relative is helping to drive prices of *all* games up. While software publishers do not directly add in the estimated cost of piracy to a new game, they *do* estimate how many copies they expect to sell and price accordingly. It's simple mathematics; the more games you can sell, the less you have to charge. One well-placed, but unidentified source, told Mulligan that piracy could possibly add up to $10 to the price of every new game.

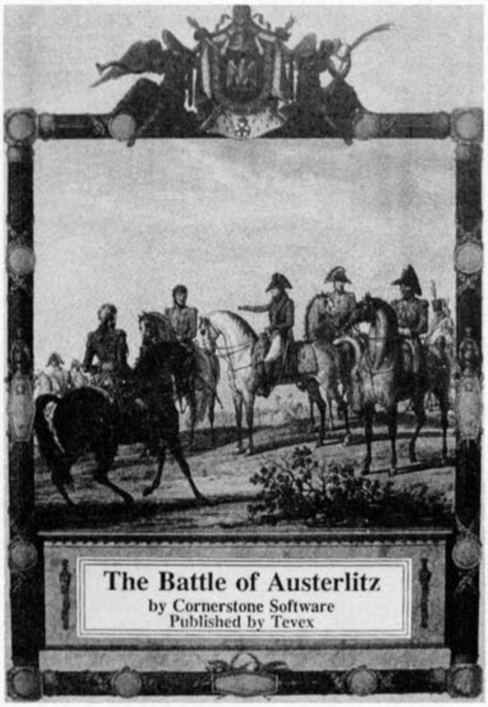
"It might be interesting for you to remember," Mulligan closed out his article, "the next time you give a friend a free copy of a new game, that you just drove the price of the next new game up a penny or so."



"Are you *sure* they're in the public domain?"

BATTLE OF AUSTERLITZ

by M. Evan Brooks





TITLE:	Battle of Austerlitz
SYSTEM:	IBM (soon on C-64, Amiga and ST)
# PLAYERS:	1
DESIGNERS:	Stephen M. Beckett and Steven Krenek
PRICE:	$49.99 ($34.99 from Tevex)
PUBLISHER:	Cornerstone Software/Tevex Atlanta, GA

Battle of Austerlitz (*BOA*) is a combined release by **Cornerstone Software** (formerly **Krentek Software**) and **Tevex** (best known for mail order discount software), which is now seeking to achieve vertical market expansion. *BOA* is a simulation of the "Battle of the Three Emperors" (Napoleon I [France] vs. Tsar Alexander I [Russia] and Francis I [Austria]), the strategic triumph by Napoleon occurring on December 2, 1805, virtually one year after he assumed the Imperial title of Emperor of the French.

Designers Beckett and Krenek are Napoleonic enthusiasts and have previously done *Napoleon at Waterloo* and *Napoleon at Borodino*. Each product is based on a similar system, utilizes the same basic graphics, and reflects an examination of grand tactics in the Napoleonic battlefield.

Documentation

The documentation is clear and concise. Play mechanics (relatively easy to grasp) are fully explained, as well as the basic premise behind the battle. Further, strategic/tactical guidelines are presented. This reviewer had previously criticized **Krentek**'s Napoleonic simulations for lacking a printed map; *BOA* includes a hard copy map, but its "contemporary" appearance belies much of its intended usefulness. Nevertheless, since one can quickly switch to a strategic map while playing the game, there is no real loss. Note that the map sheet shows a succinct listing of play commands and input mechanics (keyboard, joystick or mouse).

Graphics

The graphics of *BOA* still appear reminiscent of Chris Crawford's *Eastern Front* (1979). Troops/formations appear as either figures or military symbology (the latter is recommended, since it yields more information as to a unit's status). Utilizing a low-resolution EGA background, the best that can be said of the battlefield graphics is that not much is lost in playing the product on a CGA-laptop machine.

Topography ostensibly had an impact on the battlefield; however, the graphic rendition herein is such that one questions the strategic import of the Pratzen Heights (historically, Napoleon had secured the "high ground" only to yield it to his opponents in a classic trap—knowing that his clumsy opponents would rush to seize such terrain while the superior "Grand Armee" would outmaneuver and destroy the combined Austrian-Russian forces).

Troop formations are easily discerned (square, line, column), but overall, *BOA* is not a graphics-intensive product. If anything, its mediocre graphic presentation detracts somewhat from the play value.

Game Play

While player input can be done via keyboard, mouse, or joystick, this reviewer found that the keyboard offered the easiest interface. Joystick and mouse options were difficult to use, with the destination area often missed, involving numerous retries and frustration; keyboard interface is quick and simple.

Infantry units may assume formations: line (firepower maximization) or column (shock melee power optimization), and also square when threatened by cavalry (this last formation is automatically adopted when necessary).

Infantry units from the same Corps may be merged, thereby allowing one to create the massive Napoleonic offensive columns for a shock offensive. Historically, these were a characteristic of the later Napoleonic army, since it required little expertise (and the veteran infantry lay dead under a myriad of battles). In 1805, Napoleon's "Grand Armee" retained a cadre of veterans and did not have to resort exclusively to the massed columns.

While the player may individually order units (brigades), he may also issue corps orders, which reflect the overall tenor of Napoleonic combat in a more historical manner (albeit at a corresponding lack of player control). Finally, when one deems the moment correct, he may order the entire army to advance to effect the final destruction of one's opponent.

The basic terrain "hex" is 275 yards. Turn duration may be arbitrarily selected between 1-60 seconds per game minute (easily selected by using numerals from "1" to "9"; the lower the number, the faster the simulation flows).

BOA utilizes leaders, and one may elect any of six historical personages—so that one could fight against the French using Alexander as their leader! Of course, the enthusiast will attempt to best Napoleon, the true challenge. Seven scenarios are available, with three concentrating on portions of the battle (tutorial devices), one reflecting the battle itself, and three showing alternative orders of battle.

Historically, the French must decisively defeat the combined Austrian-Russian army. To do so, they must seize the initiative. Better leadership, morale and formations permit the French to overcome a numerical inferiority and smash the Allied right flank. As Napoleon conceived of the battle, the Allied left would attempt to penetrate the French lines, but would be unable to do so. Meanwhile, the main French forces (center-left) would fall on the Allied right and collapse the Allied positions.

Playing the Allied position is a challenge. One's troops and maneuverability are dismal. Therefore, careful planning is essential to ensure that assaults are carefully coordinated and massed.

While *BOA* is a real-time simulation (time flows inexorably while the player deliberates his actions), the Designer Notes are rather hyperbolic when they say:

There is no comparison between Austerlitz and other wargames. Austerlitz is the first computer wargame to begin to utilize the computer's abilities on a Grand Tactical Scale, unlike those weak, slow, unrealistic board game clones."—Designer Notes, Page 22

Strategically, Napoleon had defeated one wing of the Austrian Army at Ulm, and his dispositions at Austerlitz placed him half-way toward winning the battle before the first shot was fired. However, he required a decisive defeat of the Allied forces. Otherwise, he would have had to retire, not being able to logistically sustain his forces on Austrian soil. In game terms, however, the computer-controlled French will remain static, even if the Allied forces do nothing. This results in a "non-decisive battle—a draw". While a draw may have been tactically non-decisive, it would have been a strategic defeat for Napoleon and compensation for the Austrian capitulation at Ulm.

If the Allied forces had remained on the defensive, Napoleon would have been compelled to attack. Napoleon knew his opponents and their weaknesses, but that is no reason for the Allied player to compel himself to act rashly in accordance with "historical results".

Conclusions

BOA is a Napoleonic simulation of introductory/medium complexity. Its mechanics are dated (and it shows) and it lacks a Napoleonic panache. Given the current state-of-the-art, *BOA* is not "art"! However, for the true Napoleonic buff, *BOA* may be of some entertainment value.

At the conclusion of the battle, Napoleon told his army, "Soldats! Je suis content de vous" ("Soldiers! I am pleased with you"). Sadly, this reviewer could not echo the Master's sentiments regarding *BOA*. **CGW**

Circle Reader Service #28

Harpoon

Continued from page 21

mere experience. The only way it can occur is for the NATO player to be exceedingly stupid while the Soviet player is exceedingly lucky.

ASW Warfare: The best deterrence to an enemy submarine is a helo squarely on top of it. But if a torpedo is launched, one may do well to split his group, and enter a new course leg for evasion purposes. Naval doctrine (ASW school) teaches that a surface vessel *never* moves at a speed under 15 knots. Further speed reductions would reduce its ability to reach flank speed quickly if an incoming transient was detected.

Nuclear War At Sea

Merely because one is given "Nuclear Release" does not mean that such option has to be used. If one is winning a scenario, nuclear weapons should not be introduced. If they are, quickly use the Formation Editor to maximize dispersal.

A separate module in the "Maritime Operations" course of the Naval War College is devoted to nuclear war at sea. The gist of the module is that tactics have not been really developed for such an occurrence. *Harpoon* also does not simulate EMP (electro-magnetic pulse) which would damage computers and transistors, but not vacuum tubes (which is why certain Soviet fighters were using vacuum tubes, much to the amusement of Western military analysts until they thought of the EMP-potentials).

Could a nuclear release be limited to an at-sea release? Again, a politically debatable question, but this reviewer feels that a major fleet loss by NATO caused by nuclear weapons would probably generate a nuclear answer on land (since the Soviet army would be a cohesive and logical target).

Conclusions

Harpoon is a simulation requiring careful analysis of platforms and their capabilities. While the novice may feel initially intimidated, a cohesive plan and ability to react to circumstances will yield appropriate dividends.

In the larger scenarios, make sure to avoid micro-management. While a submarine evasion in the south may be better accomplished by a hands-on approach, the concentration thereon may blind the player to a larger air threat developing to the north. One must examine the threat potentials and be willing to cut one's losses in order to achieve strategic success.

For further reading,:

Harpoon by Larry Bond (GDW), the pen and paper version of the game; the Data Annex Book alone is worth the price of admission; *Fleet Tactics* by Wayne Hughes; *Sea Power Of The State* by FADM Sergei Gorshkov; *The Price Of Admiralty* by John Keegan.

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Circle Reader Service #43



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Circle Reader Service #45 »

Letters From Paradise



Prophetic License

I have just received my first subscription copy of *Computer Gaming World*. For the past year, I have been buying *CGW* at the newstand and I have finally decided to subscribe to your fine magazine.

What I am writing to you about is the review in your March issue by M. Evan Brooks and his reference to the drug marijuana. In his article, "Classic Conversions", Mr. Brooks said, "Risk—the marijuana of wargaming (i.e. just about every grognard started with this one.)".

This comment seems out of place coming from your magazine. I do not agree with Mr. Brooks. Playing *Risk* is not on the same level as a marijuana high. I do not see the parallel between wargamers starting with *Risk* and drug users starting with marijuana. Not only does this comment show me a lack of concern for the seriousness of drug abuse, it does not add anything to the review.

Is this an indication of a trend? Will future articles on computer games relate the thrill of flying a flight simulator to that of taking crack or the strangeness of playing an adventure game to an LSD trip? I hope it is not. If it is, then Mr. Brooks should also explain the dark side of drug abuse. He should explain the hardships of the drug user, the lives lost to drugs and families ruined by drug abuse.

I have enjoyed reading *Computer Gaming World* over the past year. Especially the outstanding articles by Mr. Brooks and other authors whose quality reviews help me considerably in deciding what computer games to buy. But I do not appreciate your lack of concern for drug abuse.

Dan Bailey
Hudson, OH

Figures of speech can be dangerous tools for a writer to use. Figures of speech derived from social issues can be a two-edged sword. Evan's use of the marijuana metaphor could be taken several different ways. It was intended to say that Risk *was an engaging wargame that caused many of us to want more. As such, it was essentially an anti-marijuana statement which implies that marijuana is addictive and alluded to the danger of escalating to "harder stuff". Whereas most of us believe that marijuana does cause a psychological dependence on the drug and a psycho-social tendency toward addictive drugs, it is not "technically" an addictive substance in its own right. The reference was almost edited out because of this technical inaccuracy (combined with the metaphor's implication that there might be something wrong with* Risk *and wargames). The perception that this was a "positive" figure of speech which trivialized marijuana use (much less encouraged it) was as unexpected as conservative judges disqualified from the U. S. Supreme Court because of "youthful indiscretions". Frankly, colorful language tends to take these types of risks, however. Former President Nixon recently used the same basic image when he said, "Anyone who thinks Japan is going to export democracy to China must be smoking pot." As for the contention that the metaphor added nothing to the review, it certainly accomplished several things: 1) it indicated that* Risk *is an excellent wargame for beginners; 2) it stimulated a controversial discussion; and 3) it provided an opportunity to highlight the drug problem in a different context.*

Funan Dandy

I just returned from a trip to the Far East and observed that your magazine has been accorded a dubious honor. As you are doubtless aware, software piracy is rife in that part of the world. In Funan Mall in Singapore, there are two floors of a mall given over to computer firms and each one sells pirated software. IBM is the machine of choice, but all brands from Apple and Amiga to Atari ST and Commodore 64 are available on one floor. In several stores, I noticed that a pride of placement was given to your magazine, which was available for reference in helping buyers select their software. This speaks volumes for the respect with which you are held in all areas of the industry. It was interesting to note that IBM software, because of the competition, was roughly $3.00 U.S. per disk, while Amiga or Atari ST was about $7.00 U.S. per disk, due to lower demand.

Ernest Claridge
Mississauga, Ontario, CANADA

Were those "published" issues of CGW *or "copied" issues? Seriously, the authoritative nature of our position is certainly flattering, but it becomes rather bittersweet when it is juxtaposed against such flagrant disregard for the hard work of our industry's labor.*

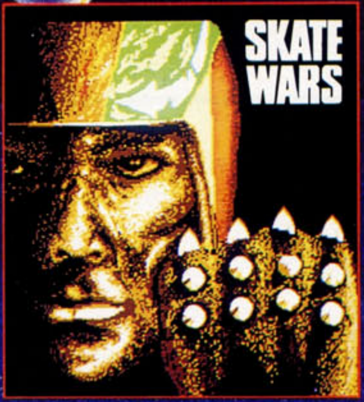
Spot Approver

I just had to write and tell you that you MADE the recent Consumer Electronics Show for me. Of course, all the press people who came through our suite were very complimentary about our upcoming titles. And I was especially confident about *Spot*. From the first, I've felt that it's the best thing we've ever done and one of the best games I've ever played. But your quality standards are of the very highest—you're critical of mediocrity and slow to praise unless a product genuinely deserves it.

Your comments on *Spot* were even more than I had wished for. When you made the statement that *Spot* was one of the three most outstanding games you saw at the show, I felt that we had finally "arrived" as a games publisher worthy of real notice.

Annette Gerth Childs
Vice President of Marketing
Virgin Mastertronic

We've been noticing! **CGW**



SO YOU THINK YOU'VE SEEN IT ALL ! NOT A CHANCE !

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Maim, trip, push, and shove... show no mercy.
Only the brave win, or even survive !

Choose your players carefully based on their different abilities. Your success will depend on your teams' shooting abilities, strength, balance and reactions.



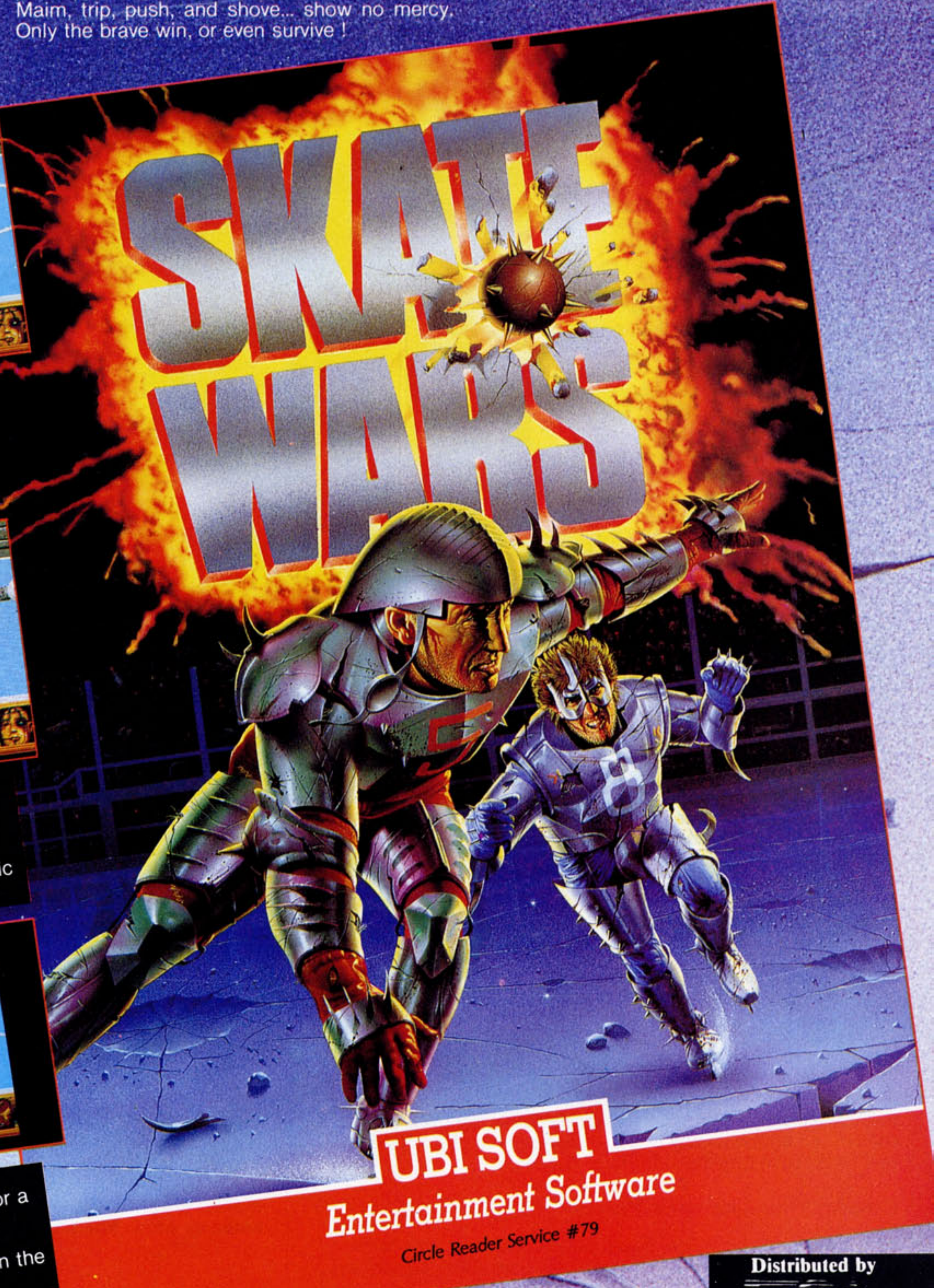
Avoid disintegrators, pits, stone pillars, spiked balls and other disasterous obstacles that will challenge your every move.



Tackle your opponents with flying kicks, pushes and side slams. Victories are won with aggressive tactics and strategic moves.



Play against the computer or a friend, but beware there's no guarantee that you'll remain friends after the one round in the ice stadium.



☐ COMMODORE 64
☐ IBM (to come soon)

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Screen shots represent Commodore 64 and Amiga

The NAVY'S ANGELS

Accolade's Formation Flight Simulation

by Lt. H. E. Dille

Whenever man makes a new discovery, it is inevitable that other men will follow with more bold and daring applications for the original vision. In the history of aviation, it is doubtful that the Wright brothers anticipated the manner in which their invention would be exploited by the barnstormers and wing-walkers a scant twenty years later. Many of these pilots were veterans of the First World War, where their finesse with a control yoke was refined in life or death situations. In peace time, these predecessors of the modern daredevils prided themselves on pushing their skills and their equipment to the edge of the envelope, for the purposes of their own gratification and delighting the hometown spectators. From these simple beginnings, a tradition of precision and expertise was born. Such values are so precious to military professionals that it was inevitable that teams such as the Air Force's "Thunderbirds" and the Navy's "Blue Angels" would not only be formed, but quickly rise to the pinnacle of precision formation stunt flying.



Title:	Blue Angels: Formation Flight Simulation
System:	IBM
Price:	$49.95
Designers:	Rick Banks Paul Butler
Publisher:	Accolade San Jose, CA

The evolution of aviation simulation within the computer industry has similar parallels. In the beginning, armchair aviators were thrilled by simply being able to fly realistic simulations of small aircraft in products like **Sublogic**'s *Flight Simulator* series. Soon, the demand to be able fly more powerful, stunt capable aircraft, led to products such as **Sierra**'s *Stunt Flyer*. Eventually, players could not resist the challenge of simulated combat in high performance aircraft. The industry, especially companies like **Microprose**, met that demand with more products than space permits mentioning.

Formation-flying was the next logical step in the evolution of aviation simulation and the first product to break the barrier was *Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer* by **Electronic Arts**. **Accolade**'s offering, *Blue Angels*, is designed to place the player in the cockpit of an F/A-18 as a member of the world's finest aviation performance team. As such, it has been eagerly anticipated by an increasingly sophisticated generation of computer aviation enthusiasts. This reviewer was no different, having become enamored with the beauty and aggressive grace of the "Navy's Angels" while attending the U.S. Naval Academy.

Earning Your Learner's Permit

Accolade realized that few, if any, players would be able to boot the game and start right out with an actual air show, so they established a logical framework to allow novice aviators to work up to that point. After verifying one's credentials as a prospective Blue Angel, via a code wheel-based copy protection scheme, players should start by viewing any of the three types of air shows (high, low and flat) in the spectator mode. This is a nice feature that allows you to watch the show from the stands, an observation balloon, or in a chase plane behind any pilot within the group.

After familiarizing yourself with the basic flow of events in each of the shows, it is time to start simulator training. The simulator allows players to select any of the maneuvers for practice; displays the maneuver in a nicely conceived three-dimensional rotating cube; and then, places players at the starting point of a series of wire frame rectangles in the sky which indicate the proper flight path. An autopilot function plays the maneuver initially, to provide a first person perspective. Then, the player may fly it himself, using either "stop time", "real time" or no help whatsoever. Instead of the F/A-18 instrumentation that might be expected, the entire cockpit is relegated essentially to two demand display indicators (DDI's) and a horizon reference. The DDI's are best utilized to display the flight evaluator and help info until one reaches the proficiency of flying an actual air show (where no help is allowed). "Stop time" help automatically pauses the simulation as one comes to the next rectangle and indicates the proper control commands for the maneuver. "Real time" help provides the same recommendations without pausing the maneuver and "No help" is just like it sounds. Additional aids to beginning pilots include the ability to practice maneuvers at quarter and half speed, as well as the ability to select easy and medium difficulty settings. The manual states that the "Hard" setting requires extremely precise timing and the manual does not lie. The most important thing to be accomplished in the simulation sequences is to memorize the timing and order of key strokes for a given maneuver.

Once comfortable with a given maneuver, it's time to practice in an actual F/A-18 (sans instrumentation), without benefit of the rectangles in the sky. Each maneuver is rated for its deviation from the perfect path and may be displayed in the aforementioned three-dimensional cube display. After a number of maneuvers are perfected, one returns to the simulator to fly an entire air show, where the sequence of maneuvers is determined

Continued on page 52

Stick it



in your ear.

For all the sounds you hear when you're playing a game, there are probably as many you don't. Our engineers tell us it isn't so much a reflection on your ears as it is on your computer. They also tell us it's easily corrected. The new Roland LAPC-1 tone generator and intelligent MIDI interface provides IBM-PC and compatible users with a humongous selection of both instrumental and percussion timbres, as well as, and this is the fun part, sound effects–all courtesy of the same legendary L/A Synthesis you'll find on our MT-32 Multi-Timbral Sound Module.

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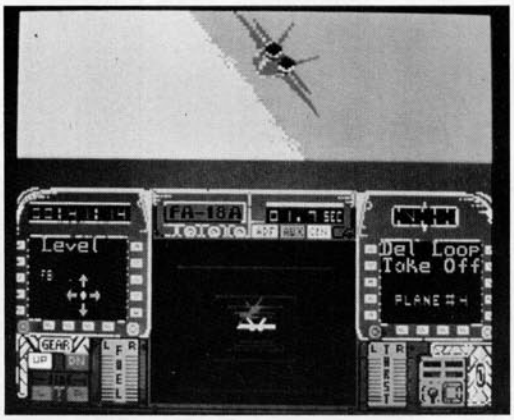
Roland®

Roland Corp US, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040 213 685-5141

System Requirements: IBM-PC/XT/AT or compatible, minimum 256k RAM

Navy's Angels

Continued from page 50



by the type of show selected and which formation position is chosen. The player must now memorize the flight path, control command strokes and the applicable time for each from the mission chronograph. The latter is vital, even if flying through the proper rectangles has become easy, because once play progresses to the next stage (practicing for an air show in the plane), the chronograph is the only reference one has, as to when to begin a given maneuver. The soloist positions are the most difficult, as a large part of your routine is spent out of visual contact with the rest of the team.

On Final

In the higher graphic modes, EGA and VGA, *Blue Angels* is aesthetically pleasing, although a higher degree of ground detail would have been nice. In CGA mode, the game is fairly disappointing visually. The action is just about right on the 286 or better, but gamers with XT machines should definitely steer clear, since the frame update is slow and makes the action jumpy. For example, when doing a knife edge pass with the opposing soloist in front of the spectator stands, the other plane is visible at half a mile then poof, he's already past. This simply does not convey the thrill that one would expect to receive from two aircraft passing mere inches apart at over a thousand miles an hour of closure rate.

Blue Angels emphasizes timing and pattern repetition, a necessity of formation flying. On that level, the program succeeds in reaffirming the difficulty inherent in these types of maneuvers. Whether computer aviation enthusiasts will find this more fun than traditional flight simulators, in which pilots retain considerable freedom, remains a matter of personal taste.

This reviewer had trouble maintaining a high degree of interest throughout the many hours of practice necessary to develop the required proficiency. Nevertheless, *Blue Angels* deserves a fair amount of consideration based on novelty alone. As such, the product is recommended, with the aforementioned reservations, to PC pilots seeking a change of pace. **CGW**

Greg Norman's Shark Attack!

THE ULTIMATE GOLF SIMULATOR



AMIGA



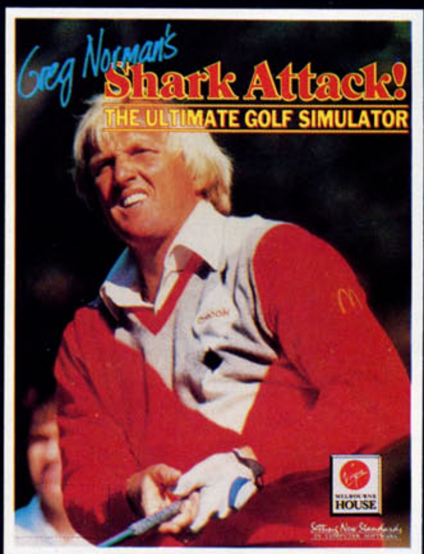
IBM EGA

It's professional golf at its best with the game's most aggressive and successful player, Greg Norman . . . a state-of-the-art golf simulation with more realistic three-dimensional graphics than you've ever seen before!

Rich in detail, Shark Attack is packed with features not included in lesser games, including:



ATARI ST



- Pre-game Practice, Matchplay, Greensomes, Strokeplay, and Texas Scramble, all handicapped according to adjustable attributes, with single and team play options (up to four players).
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- On-screen ability to design your own swing, for a game which is more dependent on skill than luck.
- Greg Norman's swing digitized for your instruction in the best golfing form.
- Ability to open and close the club face and adjust the loft, totally on-screen, for greater control.
- A 3-D perspective, which can be rotated through 360 degrees from any point. You can really walk each hole, and study the lie of each shot just like you would on a real golf course (one of the features that make this a simulation, not just a game).
- Changing wind and weather conditions, to add to the challenge.

Greg Norman's Shark Attack: the first true golf simulation, produced under the guidance of the Great White Shark himself! As on the pro circuit, total concentration, strategy and control are all required to come in under par!



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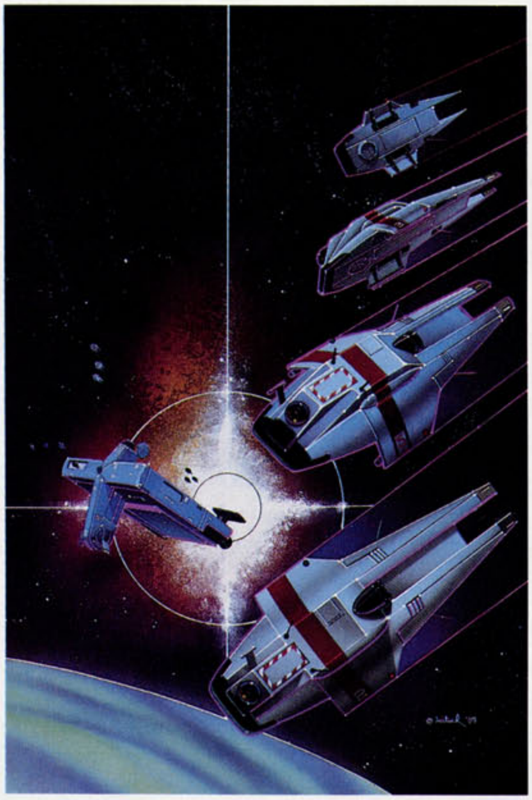
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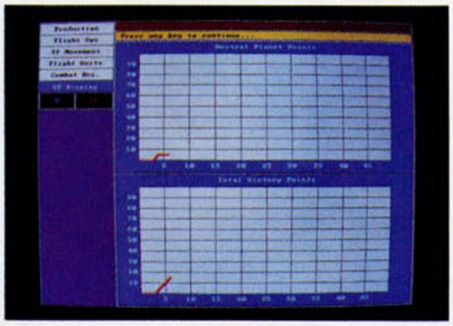
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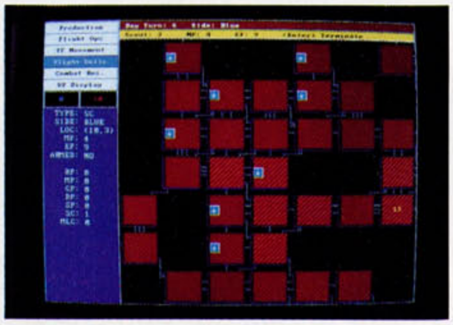
Conflict in the Cosmos

"Worlds At War" From Lyric

By Bob Proctor







TITLE:	Worlds At War
SYSTEM:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$39.95
DESIGNER:	John Almberg
PUBLISHER:	Lyric Software Inc. 6 Beach Plum Dr. Northport, NY 11768

Worlds at War (*WAW*) is a game of planetary conquest. You and one opponent start at opposite ends of a region of space that is scattered with neutral planets. You can play to find and destroy the enemy's home base (this is usually decisive but hard to do), play to capture and control a majority of planets, or play to destroy the enemy space fleet. After its annihilation, you can pick up a planet or two and win easily.

I've presented these choices too simply, of course. A "mature" strategy will not only try for more than one of these goals but will attempt to adapt to the geography of a particular game.

Base-ics

Your home planet is a "base". It has characteristics such as defensive power (shields), staying power (damage control), gunnery power (wham-o) and also the capacity to launch missiles and bombers. Both carry the same punch, missiles are faster and better for getting in the first strike but bombers have longer range and can be reused. A base can also handle scout ships—more on these later. Neutral planets automatically become bases, if they are captured and held for ten consecutive turns.

Your home base begins with some large number of production points which you allocate to all of the above features as you see fit. Besides building up the home base, you may also want to set aside a few points for Task Forces. A TF is like a planet that moves; it has all of the same characteristics except it does *not* generate more production points as the game progresses. A TF has one additional feature, it can carry marines to drop as an invasion force on neutral planets. TF's have movement factors (in the same way that missiles, bombers and scouts do) and also have unlimited endurance so that they never have to return for refueling.

Don't think of it as a ship, think of it as a fleet complete with supply ships to keep it going.

The game is short, 50 turns is the default, so in a couple of hours you are going to know how successful your strategy was. *WAW* rarely drags on for many turns after the conclusion becomes obvious. On the other hand, you can make some horrible choices right at the beginning and not realize it for 20 or 30 turns, at which point it's almost always too late to correct. It's all part of learning.

Flexing The Galactic Arm

Imagine a grid of 20 by 30 squares. The squares connect at the sides and corners so from any interior square you can move to any of its eight neighbors at a cost of one movement factor. This is the flat or "naval" map (as it is called in the manual).

You can choose to play with it but I recommend opting for the Space Map. It's what makes *WAW* unique. Keep that flat map in your mind and eliminate a few squares at random. Such is the fabric of Space. Next connect adjacent squares with "hyperspace tunnels" that require either 1, 2 or 3 movement factors to use. These are shown on screen simply as single, double or triple lines connecting the boxes. Some adjacent boxes may not even be connected!

Things are getting interesting, the shortest path between two boxes is not always the obvious one any more. Now regenerate these pathways each and every turn! Space becomes a shifting uncertainty! A bomber formation that needed 10 MF to reach a

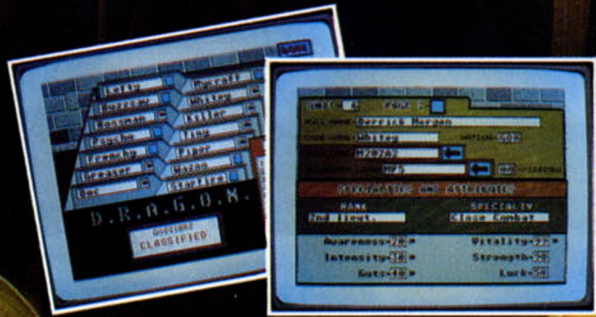
Continued on page 62

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Scorpion's View

Continued from page 30

did not seem to me to be very fair. After defeating the extremely nasty Death Knight, Sir Lebaum, you are suddenly rushed through a number of sequences that drop you off in Kernen for the showdown with Myrtani (the main evil baddie).

There are some opportunities to rest and renew spells in between, as well as save the game, and in Kernen you can even find a trainer. However, there is no place to have any of the objects you may have picked up along the way identified (you will probably have several) and no place to buy anything. Ergo, you should stock up on things like magic arrows, potions, and suchlike before taking on the Death Knight, as you'll have no chance afterward.

You also need to be prepared for the final combat, as in fact there are two fights, back to back. After dealing with Myrtani, you go immediately to a confrontation with three large red dragons who must be killed, with no chance to save the game in between. If you blow it here, you'll have to restore and fight Myrtani (who is an Aurak) all over again, and hope you can do better against the dragons the second time around.

The copy protection is of the "look up a word" type, and SSI made a mistake in their choice of where to look up the words, namely in the paragraphs of the adventurer's journal. You aren't supposed to read them until you reach certain points in the game. Since there are twenty-five pages of game information in front of those entries, there is no reason why the paragraphs should have been used for the copy protection.

Actually, *Champions of Krynn* is a pretty good game overall, but you do have to be aware of its failings as noted above. The manual contains pretty much all the information you need to create a viable party, and has some good tips on play, as well, so do read it before you start. As long as you know what you're getting into, and what to expect, you can have a good time with the game. Just be careful out there!

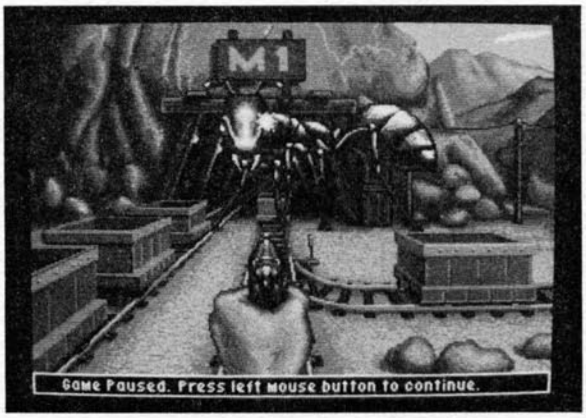
That's about it for now. If you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie: Stop by the Games Roundtable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**

Desert

Continued from page 10



Bradley has several other matters to worry about. A young, attractive woman who barely escaped becoming ant food is now showing a strange interest in the creatures and an even greater interest in Dr. Bradley. The doctor already has a girlfriend, who works at the town radio station (KBUG) and also happens to be very quick to become jealous. If the ants don't get him, one of the girls may!

A gang of teenage thrill seekers are determined to challenge the game's hero in a game of "chicken" ('a la James Dean). They emerge from the desert highway as if to drive head-on into the doctor's car. Imagine what it might take to stop them.

Finally, there is a hospital sequence which is even more uproarious than the one found in Cinemaware's *The Three Stooges* game. Each time Dr. Bradley is struck down, he finds himself in a sickbed, attended by a voluptuous nurse. The conscientious staff of the Lizard Breath Hospital will not allow Bradley to check out of the place a moment short of his allotted recovery time. So, in order to get Bradley back on the case, the player uses an overhead view to control him as he darts in and out of hospital rooms, diving in between bed-sheets, and racing in a wheel-chair towards the institution's exit, all the while pursued by the staff.

You Won't Believe Your Eyes (Conclusions)

In its recent releases, Cinemaware has made many improvements to their games. Most important, the game can be saved in progress to a blank disk (which must be formatted in advance). The game can also be paused at any time, even during the arcade sequences. The instructions are brief but quite adequate. They also include a large, fold-out map of Lizard Breath which becomes quite useful. *Desert* comes on three (Amiga) disks and contains no copy-protection. It requires one full megabyte of RAM and may be installed on a hard disk.

Warning: The hard-disk installation and booting procedure is the only subject not adequately covered in the manual. Amiga owners will need to close all non-essential windows, even if they possess more than the minimum memory, or the program will crash.

Unless you disliked past Cinemaware releases such as *Rocket Ranger* or *Lords of the Rising Sun*, you will undoubtedly like *Desert*. Fans of 50's science fiction films will, of course, be delighted with the "authentic" atmosphere of the game. They should *not* think, however, that this is just another pretty set of sounds and graphics. *It Came From The Desert* is a very playable and compelling game with many enjoyable hours to be experienced. **CGW**

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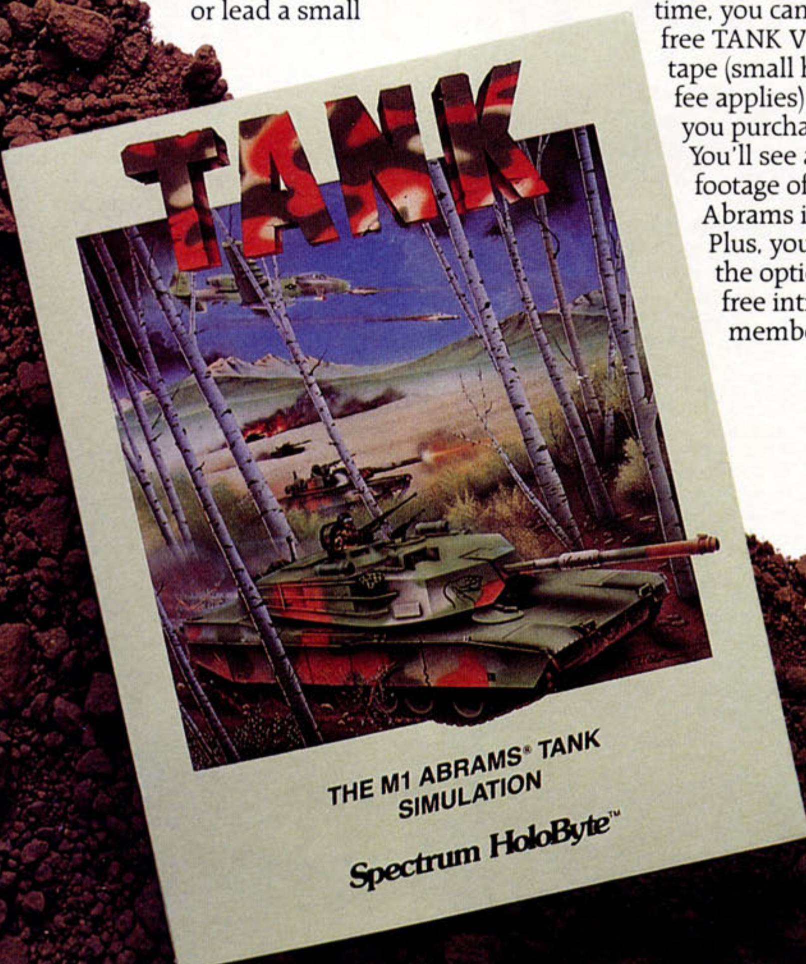
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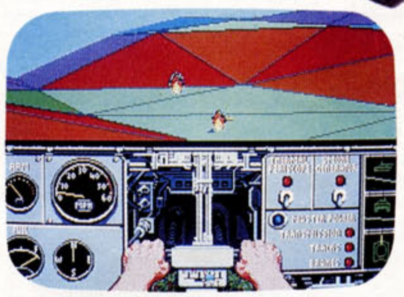
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Inside The Industry

Healthy 1989 Finish For Software Publishers

According to the financial statements of three publicly held entertainment software companies, the final quarter of calendar year 1989 was reasonably healthy. **Sierra** led the way in terms of sales growth for the quarter which ended December 31, 1989. Their sales increased 36% over the same quarter in 1988. For **Mediagenic** and **Electronic Arts**, the growth was a modest 4% and 2% respectively. In spite of **Electronic Arts**' modest gain in sales, the net profits jumped a respectable 21% over the same quarter in 1988. Total revenue for the last quarter in 1989 (in millions of dollars) was as follows:

Electronic Arts	Mediagenic	Sierra
$63.4	$65.5	$26.1

Konami Finds New Medium

Although many software publishers license popular characters from comic books, television and films, **Konami** recently announced that *Bayou Billy*, the alligator-wrestlin' cajun hero of the videogame published by their **Ultra Games** division, has been licensed by **Archie Comics** to star in a new comic book. **TSR**, the giant pen and paper game publisher, has licensed the rights to its **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** role-playing game to **National Periodicals** for a comic book series and will be publishing a **TSR Comics** series (featuring *Buck Rogers, Intruder* and more) under its own label. However, it is quite unusual for an original computer game character to be licensed for comic book use, as in the case of Bayou Billy.



Lucasfilm Offers Movie Deal

Customers who purchase either *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Action Game* or *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* between February 1, 1990 and June 30, 1990 have the opportunity to purchase the movie on videocassette at a special $10.00 price. The retail price for the videocassette is $24.95 and details concerning proof of purchase and buying the film at this special price can be obtained at participating retailers throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Win A Free Trip To Britain!

In search of the best air combat simulation player among CGW readers, Lucasfilm Games and Computer Gaming World announce *Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain* Competition.

Grand prize is an all-expense paid trip to England with game designer Lawrence Holland and computer Gaming World Editor-in-Chief Russell Sipe concurrent with the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Departing September 1990, the highlight of the two-week tour is *Battle of Britain Day*, September 15, 1990 and the 50th Anniversary ceremony in London. Led by Valor Tours' Bob Reynolds, Secretary of the Royal Air Force Association, the trip includes the Farnborough Air Show, numerous visits to U.S. WW II air bases in East Anglia, extensive museum and airfield tours, and even a Cambridge pub notorious for its RAF patrons; all to recreate this monumental event 50 years later.

The competition is three-tiered with players first submitting a qualifying pilot record by March 15, 1990. If chosen to compete at Level Two, players submit required campaign play records and original missions they have created using the "Mission Builder" feature, due by May 15, 1990. The five finalists chosen for Level Three then play each others original missions on or before June 15, 1990. Top scorer is then off to England in time for the 50th Anniversary!

COMPETITION RULES

LEVEL ONE

1. Submit a pilot record saved to disk with the required qualifying score--a minimum of 1000 points.

• First create a pilot from the roster screen during flight briefing. Any pilot type is acceptable. Consult page 81 of *Their Finest Hour* manual for more information. All types of pilots are eligible.

• After your qualifying pilot has reached the minimum requirements of 1000 points, copy your pilot file onto a 5 1/4" or 3 1/2" floppy disk.

Note: As a pilot is named, the program creates a DOS file name using one of the following extensions, based on type of pilot. This file name should be used in copying.

PLANE	EXTENSION NAME
Spitfire/Hurricane	.RAF
BF 109	.109
BF 110	.110
Stuka	.J87
Ju88/He111/Do17	.BMB

Example: For a Spitfire pilot named Joe the file name is JOE.RAF.

2. 100 disks will be chose randomly from those received and reviewed for qualifying requirements.

3. The qualifying pilot disk must have name, address, and phone clearly labeled on the outside and must contain only one pilot record file. Disks with more than one file or whose identifying label is illegible will be disqualified. Only one entry per person.

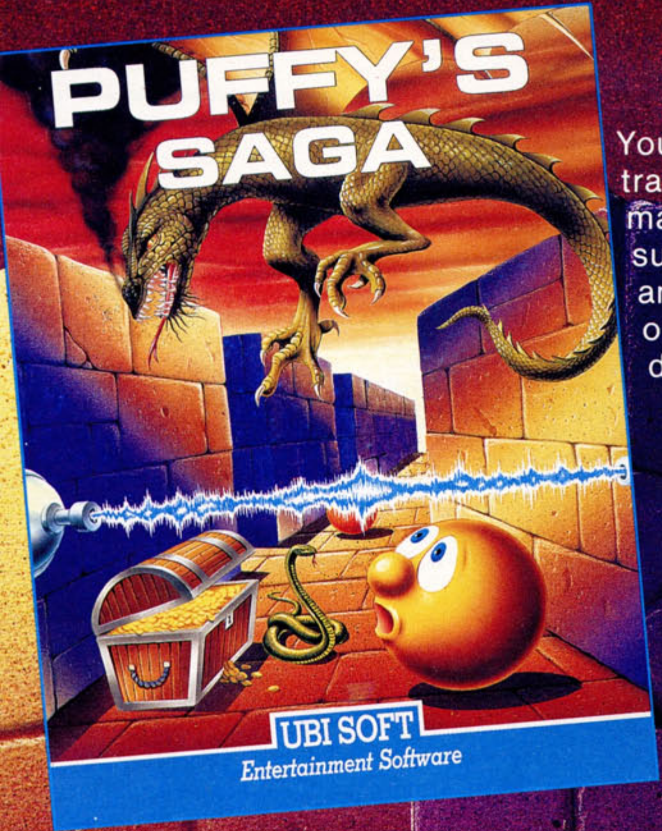
4. Send disk to address below. Entry must be postmarked by March 15, 1990. All disks received during all three competition levels become property of Lucasfilm Games and cannot be returned.

Battle of Britain COMPETITION
LUCASFILM GAMES
P.O. Box 10307
San Rafael, CA 94912

5. The 100 qualifiers chosen will be notified by mail and will receive full instructions and requirements for Level Two play at that time.

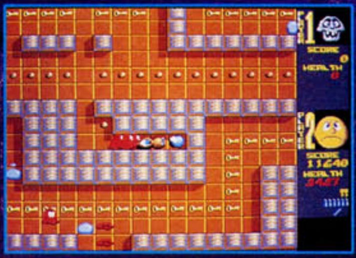
Employees, contractors, or freelancers of Lucasfilm Ltd., Electronic Arts, or Golden Empire Publications, are not eligible to enter. Void where prohibited.





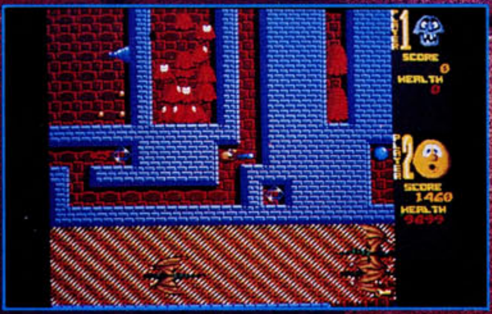
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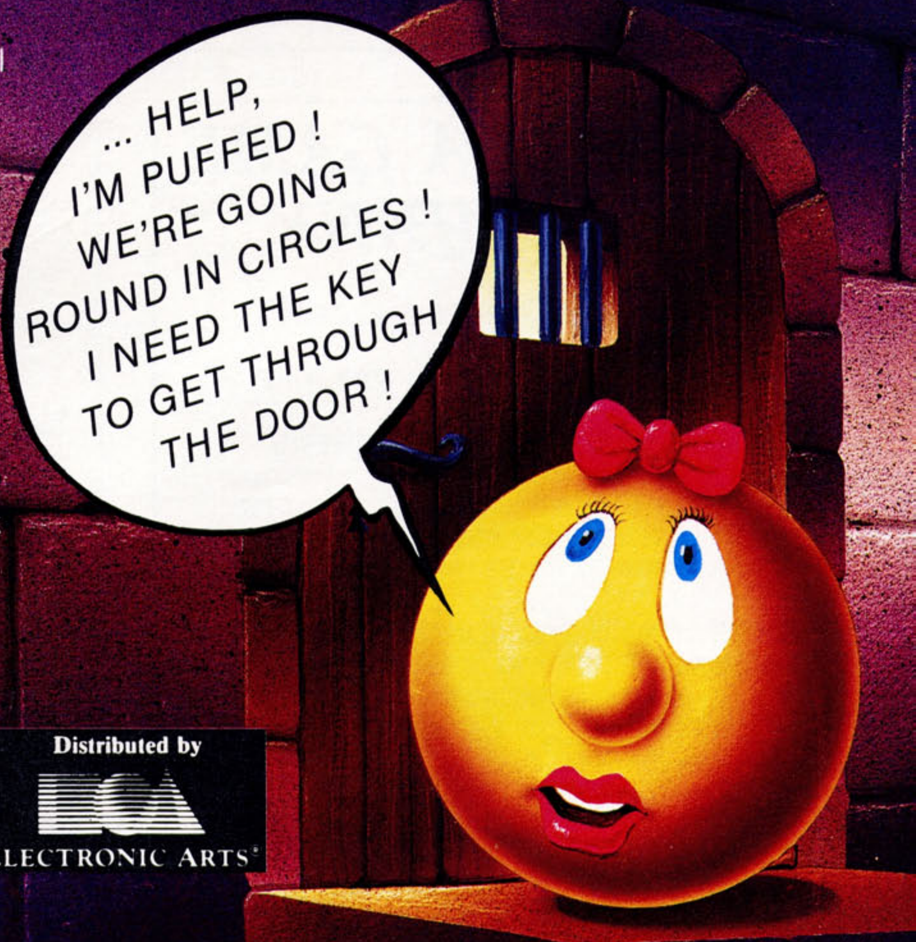
• **Race through the mazes** quickly or accumulate points by exploring each level in full.



• **Avoid the enemies...** Ghosts, Acid Puddles, Flying Dragons, and Snakes lurk around each corner.



• **Explore twenty different levels** and settings, each offering secret passageways filled with demons.



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UBI SOFT
Entertainment Software

Worlds at War

Continued from page 54

target may now need many more to return. A damaged TF with only one MF per turn may not be able to move at all!

Scouts, of course, are what you send out to discover the universe around you. They are light craft with good speed and endurance. The default values are 10 MF for 10 turns and this is generally enough for them to go from one end of a 20 by 30 map to the other so nothing stays hidden for very long in a normal game.

Lest you fear that you have to spend a lot of time manipulating scouts to warn of approaching enemies, there is an auto-scout feature that makes use of all the scouts which you do not control manually to screen the space surrounding a planet or TF.

Observations and Tips

- *Always* give your TF's a Staying Power of "60" or more so they will have the maximum movement factor (default is 6), just think of it as buying the finest warp drive available.

- Scouts report the location, but not the *strength* of an enemy TF. Therefore, it's a good idea to send in a "barrage" of one missile to determine their defensive power. Then, *never* attack with fewer bombers or missiles than this defensive strength or you will suffer catastrophic losses.

- A successful attack against a base not only reduces it, but converts it automatically to the opposite side! Defend your own bases heavily and watch for chances to steal small planets with big bomber attacks.

- Once you feel you have "mastered" the game, start changing the default options. Try more production points, a 50 by 50 map or give TF's an endurance of 30 so that they have to dock at a base every now and then. This sort of tinkering is so much fun that we can only hope that John Almberg will open up even more of the design of the game in future versions. If we could just change the combat results table and control the randomness of Space, for example, *Worlds At War* would almost be a strategy game construction set.

Assessment

Worlds At War (*WAW*) is not spectacular but is well done and workable. The concept isn't novel but it works. The graphics won't take your breath away but they convey information simply and quickly. The sounds and the manual will both leave you unimpressed. What this game *has* is play-value. Much like the very popular *Empire* and its variants, you have several viable strategies and every new game has a randomly-generated map that provides fresh challenges. **CGW**

Continued from page 6

the realm proving his mettle in order to raise an army to fight the army of chaos at the game's conclusion. Players must meet and parley with non-player characters, fight, shoot (archery tournament), drink, gamble and lead the troops in the desperate battle on the field of honor (after which, of course, is the obligatory dungeon adventure!). Amiga, Atari ST, C-64 ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

General Quarters Software
P.O. Box 1429
Torrance, CA 90505

ACTION IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC: Much like its sister game, *Battleship Bismarck*, which was peeked last issue, Action in the North Atlantic is a solid naval strategy wargame for those who do not live and die by state of the art graphics. Like Battleship Bismarck, the research is there, the strategies are varied and, fortunately for Action in the North Atlantic, the scenario is much more flexible. Walk right in, sit right down, and captain 'till the subs come home! Apple II, IBM ($35.00). Circle Reader Service #7.

Innerprise Software, Inc.
128 Cockeysville Road
Hunt Valley, MD 21030

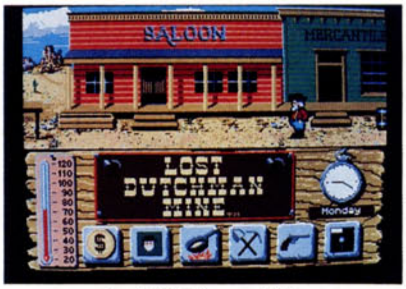
LOST DUTCHMAN MINE: There's more to this game than you'd think. While fun to play, the game is also a pretty good simulation of a lone prospector in Arizona around the turn of the 20th century. Gambling for your grubstake (fortunately the town card shark isn't that good at draw poker), outfitting your mining expedition, worrying about vermin, Indians and bandits, not to mention the ever present dangers of starvation and dehydration all add to the glitter of this little nugget. The interface is a bit clunky, but the graphics are better than average. IBM. Circle Reader Service #8.

Interstel Corporation
P.O. Box 57825
Webster, TX 77598

D.R.A.G.O.N. FORCE: This game reminds one of Omnitrend's *Breach*. This squad level combat strategy game is set in present day, where your "dirty dozen" test their different specialties (Medic, Scout, Sharpshooter, etc.) and attributes (Intensity, Guts, Luck, etc.) to the limit in order to succeed in their various missions (raiding a cocaine lab, hostage rescue, etc.). It's easy to become attached with your soldier by name and empathize with them as they tough it out in some very gritty tactical combat. Amiga 1Mb ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Kyodai
58 Mitchell Blvd.
San Rafael, CA 94903

CURSE OF BABYLON: Nintendo meets the C-64. This is one of those "serious" Japanese shoot 'em ups with a soundtrack that draws you right into the action. Lots of arcade action is awarded to those who can see past the C-64 level graphics. It's time to go into that famous computer gamer's trance and become one with your joystick again . . . C-64/128 ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #10.



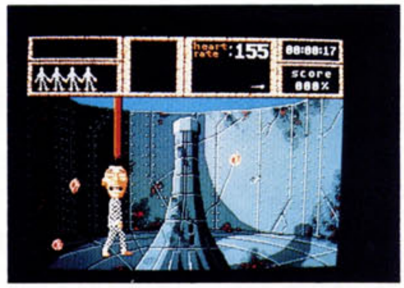
Lost Dutchman Mine



D.R.A.G.O.N. Force



Curse of Babylon



Weird Dreams



Stryx



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180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley, MD 21030

WEIRD DREAMS: Bizarre mazes of mental anguish will have you feeling a little bit out of your head every time you play Weird Dreams. The psycho-bizzaro background of this run, jump and chase game is an amusing element (bordering on either being a nightmare or "art"). Fortunately, rather than be frustrated, one can "buy" hints with which to escape the various traps and puzzles by running up the old psychiatric bill. (The title song for this game might be: "They tried to seize my wallet, but seized my brain instead".). Amiga, Atari ST, IBM ($39.95), C-64 ($29.95). Circle #11.

Psygnosis, Ltd.
Liverpool, England

STRYX: Okay, okay. Stop us if you've heard this one before. Your character must run and jump around the 2-D mazes, zapping and punching robo-bad guys and other nasties before being hit for its last bit of life. The graphics are very nice and there are even elements requiring a bit of strategy. Still, this cyborg hunt game is true enough to the genre that you know what you're getting before you ever open the box. Amiga. Circle #12.

Tiglon Software Systems, Inc.
Traviston Square, #691
4308 S. Peoria Avenue
Tulsa, OK 74105

DECISION AT GETTYSBURG: Subtitled "a user-friendly strategic simulation", *Decision at Gettysburg* lives up to most of that promise. This richly detailed wargame is fairly easy to manage, but the trouble is that there may be too much battle to worry about! You can play either side as the human player and the graphics are first rate (almost breathtaking), clearly indicating the troops, terrain and action unfolding with panoramic imagery (wargamers will find it all quite dramatic). With plenty of nice features, the only real drawback is that each and every unit must be moved one space at a time across a huge map, which is quite tedious. IBM VGA ($49.95). Circle #13. **CGW**

On the R.I.D. card provided opposite page 8, please rate the following games (if you have played them) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (I.e. A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. As with the world of education, the scale will translate to:
A= Excellent
B= Above Average
C= Average
D= Below Average
F= Failure
If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Conversions Received



Altered Beast (Sega) C64
Blood Money (Psygnosis) IBM
Bride of the Robot (Free Spirit) ST
California Challenge (Accolade) Mac
Champions of Krynn (SSI) C64
Double Dragon II (Mastertronic) ST
Dr. Doom's Revenge (Paragon) ST
The Duel: Test Drive II (Accolade) Mac
Dungeon Masters Assistant Vol 1 (SSI) Am
Hoyle Book of Games (Sierra) Am
MicroLeague Wrestling (MicroLeague) Am,IBM
The Muscle Cars (Accolade) Mac
Nevermind (Psygnosis) IBM, ST
Revolution '76 (Britannica) IBM
Rick Davis's World Trophy Soccer (Melbourne) C64
The Supercars (Accolade) Mac
Typhoon Thompson (Broderbund) Am
QIX (Taito) IIGS
War of the Lance (SSI) C64

Demographics

(List the appropriate number)
1. What is your age ?
   1 = Under 14 years old
   2 = 14-17 years old
   3 = 18-20 years old
   4 = 21-30 years old
   5 = 31-35 years old
   6 = 36-40 years old
   7 = 41-50 years old
   8 = 51+ years old

2. What machine(s) do you play games on?
(List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in decending order of use).
   1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
   2 = Amiga
   3 = Apple 8 bit
   4 = Apple IIgs
   5 = Atari ST
   6 = Atari 8 bit
   7 = C-64/128
   8 = Macintosh
   9 = Other (specify)

3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?
   1 = Less than 2 hours
   2 = 2-5 hours
   3 = 6-10 hours
   4 = 11-20 hours
   5 = 21-30 hours
   6 = 31+ hours

RID #70 Questions

Games

4. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
5. Starflight 2 (Electronic Arts)
6. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
7. Sim City (Maxis)
8. M-1 Tank Platoon (Microprose)
9. Populous (Electronic Arts)
10. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
11. Hero's Quest (Sierra)
12. Red Storm Rising (Microprose)
13. Battlehawks 1942 (Lucasfilm)
14. Loom (Lucasfilm)
15. Nuclear War (New World)
16. Crime Wave (Access)
17. Batman: The Movie (Data East)
18. Legends of the Lost Realm (Avalon Hill)
19. Iron Lord (UBI Soft)
20. D.R.A.G.O.N Force (Interstel)
21. Gold of the Americas (SSG)
22. TV Sports: Basketball (Cinemaware)
23. Indianapolis 500 (EA)
24. TANK (Spectrum Holobyte)
25. Demon's Winter (SSI)
26. The Third Courier (Accolade)
27. Breach 2 (Omnitrend)
28. A-10 Tank Killer (Dynamix)
29. Red Lightning (SSI)
30. It Came From The Desert (Cinemaware)
31. Omni-Play Basketball (SportTime)
32. Weird Dreams (Microplay)
33. Pipe Dream (Lucasfilm)
34. The Blue Angels (Accolade)
35. DeathTrack (Activision)
36. Playmaker Football (Broderbund)
37. Mean Streets (Access)
38. Champions of Krynn (SSI)
39. Action Stations (Conflict Analytics)
40. Napoleon at Austerlitz (Cornerstone)

Articles

41. Tech Column
42. Loom Sneak Preview
43. Harpoon Strategy
44. Scorpion's Mail
45. Scorpion's View
46. JCGD Abstracts
47. Third Courier Review
48. Worlds At War Review
49. Napoleon at Austerlitz Review
50. Breach 2 Review

Questions

51. In the space provided, please tell us about any compatibility problems you have had between entertainment software and your computer hardware. Please give the game title and computer name and model.


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